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"We Are All Greeks":

Assessing The Appropriation of Ancient Greece in Modern Olympic Revivals

“We Are All Greeks”: Assessing The Appropriation of Ancient Greece in Modern Olympic Revivals

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Abstract

The modern Olympic Games have proved themselves to be indelibly connected to the West's interpretation of ancient Greek culture. Indeed, reincarnations of the perceived glories of ancient Greece have been a prominent feature of Olympic revivals both before and after the establishment of the International Olympic Committee in 1894. Of particular interest to the classical scholar and the focus of this thesis is how different hosts have sought to legitimise their values using the merits of ancient Greek society often with no regard for ancient sources and the accuracy of their claims. The combination of the uncertainty surrounding ancient Greece's reality and its idealisation throughout the West presented Greek antiquity as the perfect legitimising tool, capable of successfully serving an array of social, political and philosophical functions.

This dissertation outlines how the concept of ancient Greece has developed and become distorted over time to signify a fabrication rather than a reality, building on both existing scholarship and primary source material in the process. Moreover, its unique contribution to the field lies in its exploration of how these interpretations of ancient Greece have been expressed through the medium of Olympic revivals and how ideas of Greek antiquity impacted pre-IOC revivals, especially in England and Greece, leading up to the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens. Gaps in our knowledge of ancient Greece have provided the basis for Olympic organisers to root their values in coveted antiquity and showcase them to the world with legitimacy.

List of Figures

Figure 2.1	Frontispiece of *Annalia Dubrensia*	38
Figure 4.1	1896 Athens Olympics Stamps	88
Figure 4.2	1896 Athens Olympics Participation Medals	89

Author’s Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:

List of Abbreviations

HOC *Hellenic Olympic Committee*

IOC *International Olympic Committee*

IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*

TOCOG *Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games*

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Table of Contents

Abstract ..... *i*

List of Figures ..... *ii*

Author's Declaration ..... *iii*

List of Abbreviations ..... *iv*

Acknowledgements ..... *v*

Introduction *1*

Chapter 1: The Ancient Olympic Games *9*

1.1 Introduction 9

1.2 Origins 11

1.3 Status as 'Games' 14

1.4 International Nature of the Olympic Games 16

1.5 Intellectuality and Morality 19

1.6 Cessation of Hostilities 22

1.7 Conclusion 24

Chapter 2: The Olympic Revivals in England, 1500-1900 ..... *25*

2.1 Introduction 25

2.2 The Earliest English Receptions 26

2.3 Dover's Olympics 32

2.4 Bridging Dover and Brookes: Gilbert West's *Odes to Pindar, with several other pieces in prose and verse, translated from Greek: To which is prefixed a dissertation on the Olympick Games* (1753) 41

2.5 Brookes' Olympian Games 46

2.6 Conclusion 51

Chapter 3: The Reception of Pierre De Coubertin *53*

3.1 Introduction 53

3.2 Olympism 55

3.3 Amateurism 63

Chapter 4: Modern Greece and the Athens Olympics *70*

4.1 Introduction 70

4.2 The Revival of Greece 71

4.3 Greek 19th-century Olympic Revivals 80

4.4 The 1896 Athens Olympics 85

Conclusion ***94***
Bibliography ***97***

Introduction

On 22 July 2018 the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (TOCOG) announced that the mascot for the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo 2020 was to be named Miraitowa. A combination of the Japanese words 'mirai' (future) and 'towa' (eternity), the name highlights the modern Games' goal of facilitating a more prosperous future. The mascot's personality is said to derive from a traditional Japanese proverb meaning 'to learn old things well and acquire new knowledge from them'.[1] The basis of Miraitowa's personality reminds us that meanings are not fixed but instead constructed by their interpreters based on their life experiences and cultural background, as expressed in Hans Robert Jauss' *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982). This point is highly relevant to the modern Olympic Games, which have seen an immense amount of change since their inauguration in Athens in 1896, yet which have fairly consistently invoked Greek antiquity. And since the Olympics relocate every four years, the significance of Greek antiquity for the Olympics continually changes too.

There is not an overwhelming amount of scholarship in relation to the interpretation of ancient Greece as seen through the modern Olympic Games. The most detailed study is Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson's *Thinking the Olympics* (2011) which contains a fittingly eclectic mix of themes and disciplines investigating how the supposed legacy of ancient Greece has been constructed, promoted or contested:

[1] The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games n.d.

in Ann Keen's chapter that an individual revival receives significant treatment in terms of how the host nation employed the ancient past, though in this particular case it is predominantly the antiquity of Rome that is dealt with rather than that of the Greeks.[2] Goff's introduction considers the myriad of uses of Greek antiquity by de Coubertin, the IOC's employment after de Coubertin's life and several host cities such as Berlin, London and Atlanta.[3] Olympic games offer a unique method for host nations to present their ideals to others and the use of ancient Greece often aids in this presentation. Maria Wyke and Michael Biddiss in *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity* (1999) list many of the functions that ancient Greece can serve, including the 'defining or redefining [of] genders, sexualities, races or nations, [the] confirming or contesting [of] what is civilized and what barbarous, and [the] determining [of] who is to be a member of a given community and who is to be conversely marginalized'.[4] Olympic Games have frequently been used as a means of expressing these definitions as this thesis will show.

Studies on the use of antiquity and the modern Games understandably tend to revolve around the IOC's founder Pierre de Coubertin and his employment.[5] However, the IOC's inaugural Games in Athens were far from the first revival of the ancient Olympics and Greek antiquity's appropriation was rife in the West long before his lifetime. Michael Biddiss' chapter in *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity* (1999) investigates the invention of the modern Olympic tradition and mentions several revivals that precede the IOC's but he does not elaborate on them as if

[2] Keen 2011, 156-170.
[3] Goff 2011, 1-20.
[4] Wyke and Biddiss 1999, 16-17.
[5] Biddiss 1999, 125-143; Toohey and Veal 2000, 32-37; Callebat 1998, 555-566.

their impact was minimal.[6] Several of de Coubertin's forerunners have received coverage in historical studies but the ways in which they utilised Greek antiquity have been mostly overlooked.[7] This dissertation intends to remedy this somewhat since it is clear that these earlier revivals anticipated many of the actions of national Olympic organising committees and much of modern Olympic tradition can be traced back to games that occurred before 1896. Goff in her introduction discusses how ancient Greece was employed by de Coubertin as a sign of balance and harmony and has become a shorthand for peace; building on this, we may ask what else it has been called upon to symbolise by others.[8] Furthermore, this thesis intends to shed light on several key figures who laid the foundations for de Coubertin's Olympic revival and influenced the way in which ancient Greece has been employed by him and his successors.

The purpose of this project is to explore the different ways in which ancient Greece has been constructed and then employed throughout the West, considering both the different ways in which the ancient sources have been interpreted and the development of the sway Greek antiquity possessed. Before undertaking this analysis it is critical to address the separation of the historical civilisation of ancient Greece from the idea of ancient Greece. Ancient Greece, as we know it now, is, as Goff states, not a 'pre-existing edifice' but rather, as expressed by Roderick Beaton in his interpretation of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Hellas* (1822) in *Re-imagining the*

[6] Wyke and Biddiss 1999, 125-143. See Toohey and Veal 2000, 27-31 for a similarly brief discussion of revivals held in Greece, England, North America and Germany; also p. 37 for a table of all the known revivals that took place before 1896.
[7] For example, Polley 2011, 22-28 and Whitfield 1962, 1-58 for Robert Dover and his Cotswold Games; Polley 2011, 38-47 and Young 1996, 1-41 for William Penny Brookes and his Much Wenlock Olympian Games and Evangelis Zappas and his Zappian Games. The Cotswold Games are only briefly mentioned by Lee in Goff and Simpsons 2011, 109.
[8] Goff 2011, 15.

Past (2014), ‘an idea that is not bounded by history but exists for all time, and [one that] may be endlessly renewed’.[9] The reality of ancient Greece has been lost; what stands in its place is an idea constructed from the limited source material that is shrouded in vagueness. Maria Wyke and Biddiss in *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity* emphasise the peripherality of the reality of ancient Greece by stating that it is not ‘‘the past itself’ so much as our constructed images thereof which do most to mould our cultural consciousness’.[10] This is a view supported and applied to the context of the modern Olympics by Louis Callebat in his article *The Modern Olympic Games and Their Model in Antiquity*.[11] Neville Morley claims that many accounts of ancient Greece contain ‘a mixture of hyperbolic classicism, deliberate inconsistency, and explicit disregard for the norms of philological argument’; these traits are especially evident within the sources that relate to Olympic revivals.[12] It is common for these accounts to be reproduced by successive scholars and for their assertions to make their way into popular thought, leading to the proliferation of an image of ancient Greece that is heavily invented and a scholarly tradition that can be difficult to break. This has created a compounding effect where an already idealised ancient Greece has increasingly more of its natural blemishes removed thanks to the refining of its position as an authoritative archetype that serves certain functions. This project focuses on understanding these functions, be they political, societal, philosophical or religious, and demonstrating the legitimising power that Greek antiquity possessed in the West.

Study of the reception of Greek antiquity has usually followed a conventional

[9] Goff 2011, 1; Beaton 2014, 52.
[10] Wyke and Biddiss 1999, 16.
[11] Callebat 1998, 555: ‘The revival of the Greek Olympic Games that Pierre de Coubertin wanted stems from the way in which, historically, the cultural legacy of antiquity has been passed down’.
[12] Morley 2009, 142.

framework: examining the use of ancient text X by author Y in text Z.[13] However, this is difficult to apply to the case of Olympic revivals for a number of reasons. First, what is ancient text X? There is no singular ancient Olympic text; our knowledge of the ancient Games is made up of an amalgamation of a number of different sources that are far from consistent. Secondly, taking any one Olympic revival as text Z, who is author Y? Since there are often several parties involved in the organisation of modern revivals there is no single author. For example, in the case of the 1896 Olympics in Athens (the IOC's inaugural Games), these represent the interpretations of both the members of the Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC) and the IOC. How does one actually read an Olympic revival as a single text when it consists of so many aspects? Is it through the iconography, the opening ceremony or through the official report? A host of difficulties present themselves and thus, in order to anticipate them, I shall instead explore the reception of ancient Greece in the less rigid manner suggested by Johanna Hanink: by simply looking at how it is visibly interwoven into the fabric of each revival, making use of an array of evidence relating to both the ancient and modern Games that includes literary, archaeological and visual sources.[14] To achieve this goal, I will detail the growth of the idealisation of ancient Greece at different junctures in different nations throughout the West since these revivals are direct products of this idealisation and understanding the cultural background of the interpreter is essential to the understanding of any given reception. This will begin in late sixteenth century England, where references to the Olympics first began to appear in European literature, and conclude with the 1896 Olympics held in Athens, the first instalment of the IOC's modern Olympic Games.

[13] Hanink 2017. I use 'author' in place of any type of writer or artist and 'text' in a similar fashion. See Martindale 1993, 13: anything decipherable is a text.
[14] Hanink 2017.

This thesis is not intended to be all-encompassing due to the vast number of revivals and individual instalments of the modern Olympic Games but instead it focuses on case studies in the West that cover a range of eras and locations which nevertheless have features in common. Thus, I have separated the project into several sections accordingly. The first section is a contextualising chapter that draws on the ancient literary accounts such as those of Pausanias, Plutarch and Herodotus in conjunction with archaeological evidence to provide an overview of the growth, ideals and traditions of the ancient Olympic Games. It will emphasise not only how inconclusive the literary and archaeological evidence is but also how modern high-profile accounts can stray from this evidence in their portrayals, often empowered by the absence of hard evidence which allows for scholars greater freedom to engage their imaginations.

The second chapter, which will deal with the treatment of the ancient Games in England from the early sixteenth century through to the late nineteenth century, will be split into four sections. The first will examine the earliest literary mentions of the Games and their initial associations. The following section will examine how Greek antiquity was received by seventeenth century English poets and employed by attorney Robert Dover in the Cotswold Olimpick Games, the earliest known Olympic revival. Even during the early stage of England's understanding of Greek antiquity, it was seen to offer a benchmark for traits such as virtue and honour. The third section will look at the resurgence of interest in the ancient Games, in particular the contribution of the English poet Gilbert West, focusing on the concluding section of his *Dissertation on the*

Olimpick Games (1749) entitled ‘Of the Utility of the Olimpick Games’. Hugh Lee’s chapter titled ‘Gilbert West and the English Contribution to the Revival of the Olympic Games’ discusses West’s contribution, stating that his primary concern was ‘presenting a historically accurate account of the Games’.[15] Yet, this does not appear true of the final section of West’s work and this section will therefore investigate the reliability of his sources and West’s approach to them. The final subsection will examine how Dr. William Penny Brookes, picking up from West, was influenced by ancient Greece in his Much Wenlock Olympian Games between 1850 and 1890. Much of the classicising iconography seen throughout the IOC’s modern Games was based on motifs introduced by Brookes. While these revivals have been studied from a historical perspective, the ideological aims to which ancient Greece has been applied have not received much scrutiny.[16]

The third chapter investigates how ancient the roots of the modern Olympics actually were and how de Coubertin used antiquity to conceal his true motives. It focuses on the creation of Olympism, the world philosophy that de Coubertin wished to propagate through his revival of the Olympic Games. As the founder of the IOC, many of his actions had a significant ripple effect, none more so than his unique use of Greek antiquity, which demonstrated both how influential and indeterminate his construction of ancient Greece was. The fourth chapter explores modern Greece’s use of ancient Greece in the formation of its national identity. Modern Greeks often believe that they are more than just cultural descendants of

[15] Lee 2011, 109-122; 113.
[16] For the Cotswold Games see Polley 2011, 22-37 and Whitfield 1962. For Much Wenlock see Polley 2011, 38-55 and Young 1996, 1-41.

the ancient Hellenes, so their reception takes on a different dimension from reception in other European countries, though ironically this is a theory that was exported from these countries to Greece. This chapter will examine the importance of Olympic revivals to this national identity and how they were used as a medium of communication with the rest of the world, culminating with the 1896 Athens Olympic Games, which lay the foundations for future hosts to use the Games for nationalistic purposes while making use of ancient Greek motifs to aid this cause.

Such is the scope of this dissertation, from the early use of ancient Greece to simply provide a veneer of prestige and grandeur in early modern England to a newly independent Greece drawing on the glories of ancient Greece in the development of a new national identity. Greek antiquity has been used for many different purposes over the course of its evolution in the West due to an ability to provide legitimation that has remained powerful across hundreds of years.

By being so unknown and idealised, ancient Greece was a notion that scholars and Olympic revivalists alike could mould to propagate their own ideals with the support of Greek antiquity and minimal resistance. By the 19th century it offered an archetype for the West seeking answers in regard to both history and genealogy. I hope that this project will lay the groundwork for a closer examination of the correlation between the level of ancient Greece's idealisation and its effectiveness as a means of legitimation since there is perhaps no more famous example of the appropriation of Greek antiquity than the modern Olympic Games, being an event that is both typically modern and international but bears the name of an institution that is quintessentially ancient Greek.

Chapter 1: The Ancient Olympic Games

1.1 Introduction

> The Olympic Games, celebrated every four years in Elis, on the banks of the Alpheus, were, so to say, the international Games of antiquity… This revival, after the lapse of many centuries, of the international athletic Games of the ancients irresistibly draws our thoughts towards the historic valley of Elis... to bear witness to the continuous development and improvement, both intellectual and physical, of [the Greek people]... Moreover the assembling and welding together of the finest specimens of ancient civilization, together with the cessation of all hostilities during the celebration of the Games, prefigured the rise of… brotherhood and peaceful union of all nations dwelling upon earth… We [have learnt] how very little modern Athletic Games differ from the ancient, not only in the general idea, but even in details, being founded on the same eternal principles which the Greeks laid down for the appreciation of the moral and physical improvement of all free citizens.[17]

Thus the words of Timoleon Philemon, the Secretary General of the HOC for the 1896 Games, summarise the ideals of the ancient Olympic Games from the prologue of the 1896 Olympic Games Official Report. Philemon's portrayal reflects an interpretation that believes in a continuity–of ideas rather than practice–between the ancient and the modern Games, according to which a better understanding of the ancient Games 'will serve for the better comprehension and appreciation of the

[17] Lambros and Politis 1896, unpaginated prologue.

modern International Games'.[18] This chapter will demonstrate how this is indeed the case, if not in the way that Philemon meant, and will provide the 'brief, but clear and accurate description of the ancient Olympic Games' which he recommends.[19] Whether the report either reflects his actual interpretation of ancient texts or his interpretation of Spyridon Lambros' description which followed his prologue or whether it is simply pseudohistory–something that has plagued the modern Olympic Games in particular–is unclear. Certainly, if he used ancient evidence at all, it was in a selective fashion. In this chapter, which provides a reference point for the rest of this dissertation that will constantly oscillate between modernity and antiquity, I endeavour to present an overview of the ancient Games and address the discrepancies with the ancient sources in Philemon's short account, discrepancies which result from his pro-continuity agenda. This chapter will act as an early demonstration of how accounts that do not closely reflect the ancient sources can still have a prominent effect on future interpretations of ancient Greece. The ancient Games ran for at least 1169 years if we agree with the traditional dates of 776 BC and AD 393 for their respective beginning and end, whereas only 124 years will have elapsed since the modern revival of the Games by the IOC by the time the opening ceremony in Tokyo begins in 2020.[20] They were an institution of unprecedented longevity that was subject to a great deal of change; nonetheless, I shall try to elucidate some aspects of these games to show how a popular constructed image of ancient Greece can be very distant from the evidence.

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Knowles 2005, 252.

1.2 Origins

The ancient Olympic Games formed part of a religious festival; the site's sacred nature was not a consequence of its athletic role.[21] Situated in the western Peloponnese in the district of Elis, Olympia was a remote, idyllic region that was uncommonly fertile. Why exactly Olympia was chosen as a place for the worship of ancient Greece's chief deity Zeus is still a mystery, especially considering it was over 250 kilometres away from Mount Olympus, his mythological home.[22] Terracotta figurines of the god found at the site confirm that cultic worship was present as early as the tenth century BC.[23] Yet, unusually, it remained strictly a sanctuary and never became a city-state despite its prominence. Permanent residence was open only to those in charge of ensuring the wellbeing of the site while the Olympic festival was not taking place.[24]

As would be expected of a quintessentially Greek institution, the origins of the Olympic Games are mythological. One important function of Greek myth was aetiological, representing a means of explaining the mysteries of the past.[25] As a result, establishing accurate chronologies is difficult as the boundaries of myth and history in Greek accounts are often hard to distinguish. Moreover, there are many different and conflicting myths

[21] Contrast de Coubertin in de Coubertin and Müller 2000, 256.
[22] Morgan 1990, 26-27 states that sanctuaries of Zeus were commonly situated in rural areas and thus Olympia's geography and topography could be factors.
[23] Ibid. 26.
[24] The towns of Pisa and Elis wrestled for control of the site from its inception up until 572 BC when Pisa was incorporated into Elis and both claimed to have been the original organisers of the Olympic games. The Eleans organised the games from 586 BC onwards other than in 364 BC when the Arcadians had conquered part of Elis and asked Pisa to organise the games.
[25] See Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 1990 and Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, 1993.

relating to the founding of the Games. Pausanias details several, the oldest of which traces the origin of the Games all the way back to Zeus wrestling Kronos for the throne of Olympus at the Games hosted by Idaean Heracles.[26] Pausanias claims that these original mythical Games were discontinued before being revived by Iphitus of Elis.[27] This claim is interesting for two reasons. First, much like with the 1896 Olympic Games, the narrative of revival is preferred to innovative creation because it carries the support of tradition. Just as the modern Olympic Games are regarded as a reception of the Games reinstituted at Olympia by Iphitus, those very Games were seen by some to have originally been a revival of earlier, mythical Games. For all the differences between the ancient and modern Games that this chapter will cover, the very act of reaching into the past for validation is something that the ancient Games shared with their modern counterpart.

Secondly, Pausanias states that at Iphitus' initial revival Coroebus of Elis was a victor, which casts some doubt over the traditional start date of 776 BC.[28] That date arises from the first list of Olympic victors compiled by Hippias of Elis some time in the late fifth century BC in which he lists Coroebus as the first victor.[29] We know of the existence of this list mainly because of Plutarch, the Greek biographer of the late first and early second century AD, who wrote:[30]

[26] Pausanias 5.7.7-10.
[27] Pausanias 5.4.6.
[28] Pausanias 5.8.6.
[29] Christesen 2009, 173 suggests that Hippias chose this as the first Olympiad but there were contests being held at Olympia before this.
[30] There is a fragment of Oxyrhynchus Papyri detailing Olympic victors in the fifth century BC that is

> It is difficult to make precise statements about chronology, and especially chronology based on the names of Olympic victors. They say that Hippias of Elis produced the list of Olympic victors at a late date, starting with nothing authoritative that would encourage trust in the result.[31]

That Plutarch doubted the reliability of Hippias' list and therefore the accuracy of the date for the first Olympic Games is significant in itself. Hippias did not have access to a complete list of written records of Olympic victors and there were no written records at Olympia until at earliest the sixth century, so even if he was in possession of a partial list, the names of any earlier victors would have been subject to the usual unreliability that accompanies information transmitted by oral tradition.[32] Hippias associated the first Olympiad with the life of Lycurgus, a contemporary of Iphitus, and then calculated the 776 BC start date by counting the number of generations from the Spartan king to his own age.[33] The issues with this system are clear: assigning a fixed number to each generation is bound to lead to inaccuracy as no two generations are identical in terms of length. Furthermore, Lycurgus was a semi-mythical figure and the dates for his lifetime were the subject of much debate in the ancient world.[34] Eusebius relates that Aristodemus of Elis proposed that Coroebus won the stade in the 27th Olympiad after Iphitus' revival

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thought to be based on Hippias' list, see Grenfell and Hunt 1899, 88-90.
[31] Plutarch, *Numa* 1.
[32] Christesen 2009, 165-170.
[33] Ibid. Other less probable options are discussed in Christesen 2007. 146-57.
[34] Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 1.1 says that nothing can be said about Lycurgus that cannot be disputed and there is little agreement about when exactly he lived. Although Thucydides does not mention by name in *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.18.1, he dates the reforms that are attributed to Lycurgus–mentioned in Pausanias 5.4.6–four hundred years before his time of writing, placing his lifetime in the late ninth century BC.

from which Olympiads began to be officially recorded but also claims that Callimachus believed that it was the 14th Olympiad.[35] Despite all of this, it is frequently stated that Coroebus of Elis was the first Olympic victor in 776 BC as if it were factual information; the date appears on the official website of the modern Olympic games and is also emblazoned on the cover of the inaugural modern Games' Official Report: *The Olympic Games B. C. 776 - A. D. 1896*. Frequently in modern Olympic rhetoric the complexities of the ancient sources are simplified in a way that robs certain aspects of their full character; sources that gain popularity for whatever reason tend to thrust those that are conflicting into the background. Clarity suggests confidence and authority and in this case, expressing the lack of certainty about the Games' start date would have a negative effect on both the claim of continuity between the ancient and modern Games and the IOC's authority as a knowledgeable source of information on the ancient Games regardless of whether this is more accurate.

1.3 Status as 'Games'

Philemon's first inaccuracy is one that has become a feature of modern language. As Nigel Crowther points out, the ancient Olympic Games were not actually 'games' but Olympic contests (*olympiakoi agones*).[36] Referring to them as 'games' misrepresents what the ancient Olympics meant to the Greeks because of the implications of the English terms 'game' and 'sport'. This change most likely stems from the Roman mistranslation *olimpici ludi*, which incorporated the

[35] Eusebius, *Chronicle* 69.
[36] Crowther 2006, 1-2. Throughout this study I shall still refer to the ancient Olympics as 'Olympic Games' or 'Games' because, as Crowther notes, the term has become so traditional that it would be awkward to refer to them otherwise.

Roman preference for the spectacle of athletics rather than the competition.[37] *Ludi* and *agones* are not synonymous; the survival of this slight mistranslation over some two millennia highlights how inaccuracies can become entrenched in common thought as a consequence of the power of tradition and can affect future interpretations. Many modern conceptions of ancient Greece in fact come via Rome, for example, Greek myth in the Renaissance era was mostly known through the work of Ovid rather than from direct engagement with ancient Greek texts.

Ludus derives from *ludere* (to play), which is the Latin equivalent of Greek *paizein*, a verb which derives from *pais* meaning child. *Paizein* was never used in conjunction with *agones* in ancient literature. The Greeks did not play at their athletics; they struggled at them and the principle of competition (*agon*) had a distinct motivational power among the men of Greek society.[38] The *agon* encouraged Greeks to do three things: first, to make a clear distinction between friends and enemies–there were different rules based on reciprocity for both; secondly, to emphasize that friends and enemies would be treated appropriately to their status–restraint only applied to friends; finally, to convey that public perception was crucial to one's reputation.[39] Ancient Greece was a honour-shame culture and therefore winning was essential, with the stakes only growing with the size of the audience.[40] It was victory that was significant, not the taking part like the modern Olympic Creed proposes ('The important thing in the Olympic Games is not

[37] Crowther 2006, 1.
[38] Burger 2008, 47.
[39] Osborne 2008, 127.
[40] Dodds 1951, 28-63.

winning but taking part. The essential thing is not conquering but fighting well').[41]

1.4 International Nature of the Olympic Games

Philemon's second error is that the ancient Games were not international. Only Greeks could compete at the Games and though the concept of Greek nationality in the ancient world was far removed from today's definition as there was no autonomous Greek state, the various Greek states were connected by a shared lineage, shared language and shared customs.[42] Internationalism seems improbable when we consider both the development of the programme of the Games and the gradual increase in their reach. The table below shows the expansion of the athletic programme.[43]

Olympiad	**Year (BC)**	**Event introduced**
1	776	*stadion* (approximately 190m)
14	724	*diaulos* (approximately 380m)
15	720	*dolichos* (1700m up to 4800m)
18	708	pentathlon, wrestling
23	688	boxing
25	680	four-horse chariot race
33	648	*pankration*, horse race

[41] Gwynn and Browne 1932, 347. This quotation was displayed at the 1932 Games in Los Angeles on the great scoreboard inside the Memorial Stadium at the opening ceremony and later became the Olympic Creed but it summarised Olympic ideals that had been present since the 1896 Games.
[42] Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 8.144 is an important statement of this. Non-Greeks compete in the Games only after the Roman conquest. Eusebius *Chronicle* 80 lists Emperor Germanicus as a winner of the same race in AD 17 and Nero as winner in several events in AD 65.
[43] Christesen 2009, 17. The information supplied in this table is provided by Pausanias (5.8.6-5.9.2). See Lee 2001, 2 and 3 for a discussion on other sources that help confirm Pausanias' information.

37	632	boys' *stadion*, boys' wrestling
38	628	boys' pentathlon
41	616	boys' boxing
65	520	hoplite race
70	500	race for mule carts*
71	496	race for mares†
93	408	two-horse chariot race
96	396	heralds and trumpeters
99	384	four-colt chariot race
129	264	two-colt chariot race
131	256	colt race
145	200	boys' pankration

N.B. All athletic events were contested in the nude other than perhaps the chariot races.[44]

As can be seen above, the athletic section of the Olympic festival began as just a single event and were initially held on one day only, with the athletic programme consisting of the *stadion* alone until the fourteenth Olympiad. Given the gradual nature of the growth, it is far more likely that athletics evolved at the site as an extension of the worship that was already taking place.[45] Furthermore, archaeological findings show that a large number of wells were installed at Olympia around 700 BC, indicating an increase in activity at the site; these changes in infrastructure support the theory of the Games' humble beginnings

* This event was immediately discontinued.
† This event was discontinued in 444 BC.
[44] According to Pausanias 1.44.1 the custom of nudity began with Orsippus of Megara apparently in 720 BC.
[45] See Christesen 2009, 18 for four plausible origins of the Olympic Games.

before becoming universally known throughout the Greek world.[46] Assuming Pausanias' details are accurate, why would foreigners wish to attend a Greek religious festival in a rural location, especially during its fledgling stages where there was only one athletic event?

Moreover, Eusebius' victor list does not support the theory of internationalism but instead suggests that the first few instalments were regional since the festival was dominated by Peloponnesian athletes and it is not until at least the twelfth Olympiad that we see a winner who does not hail from outside the Peloponnese; there are no foreign (non-Greek victors) at all.[47] While the accuracy of Eusebius' entire list cannot be determined exactly–it was based on the works of the third century AD historian Julius Africanus' list who most likely reworked Hippias' original list–several figures listed as victors in the fifth century BC can be confirmed by Pindar's *Olympian Odes*, which were written as contemporary texts to the victories themselves.[48] If the only material prize awarded at Olympia was a wreath from the holy olive-tree in the Altis, the site's most sacred enclosure, what value did this have to foreigners?[49]

Several literary sources record a number of interesting cases that help to explain why Philemon's claims about the Games' internationalism are erroneous. First, Herodotus ascribes an Olympic victory in the *stadion* to Alexander I, King of

[46] Raschke 1988, 114.
[47] Eusebius, *Chronicle* 70. However, Philostratus in *Gymnasticus* 12 reports that Oxythemis hailed from Cleonae. If this is true, then the first non-Peloponnesian victor would instead be Orsippus of Megara in 720 BC. Megara is still only just outside the Peloponnese.
[48] Young 2004, 20.
[49] See Herodotus *The Persian Wars* 8.26: The Persian Tigranes is amazed that it is not money that the Greeks compete for at Olympia but *arete*.

Macedon.[50] Herodotus reports that when Alexander chose to compete at OIympia the Greeks who were due to compete against him demanded that he be barred from entering because they did not deem him Greek; only after he proved himself to be of Argive heritage was he allowed to compete.[51] Archelaus I, Alexander's great grandson, is also reported to have won a four-horse chariot race at Olympia by the Latin compiler Solinus.[52] Yet, Clement of Alexandria attributes the following quote to 5th century BC sophist Thrasymachus in his *Stromata*: 'Shall we be slaves to Archelaus–Greeks to a barbarian?'.[53] The overt xenophobia displayed towards Macedonians makes Philemon's proposed internationalism highly improbable. Conceivably, since the Games spanned such a long time and Philemon does not specify which time period he is referring to, he could be referring to the Games under Roman rule where non-Greek members of the Roman empire were permitted to compete; but this would be a misleading representation of the Games as a whole.

1.5 Intellectuality and Morality

Philemon states that the ancient Games contributed to 'the continuous development and improvement [of the ancient Greek people], both intellectual and physical' and that the Greeks laid down eternal principles 'for the

[50] Herodotus 5.22.1-2.
[51] Herodotus 5.22.1-2. Herodotus states that Alexander finished joint first. Whether this happened is unknown because Alexander's name does not appear in any of the surviving victor lists but there are two fragments of Pindar that praise Alexander which could potentially be referring to this victory (Pindar, *Fragments*, 120-121).
[52] Solinus, 9.16, the only source. The Solinus source from AD 3rd century is the only extant source that reports Archelaus' victory. Diodorus Siculus 17.16.3-4 states how Archelaus instituted Games in honour of Zeus at Dion at the foot of Mount Olympus; so perhaps it is not impossible that Solinus is referring to these.
[53] Thrasymachus, *Testimonia II* D18. See Engels 2010, 81-98 for discussion of Macedonians and whether they counted as Greek.

appreciation of the moral and physical improvement of all free citizens' but the programme of the Games does not corroborate these claims; the table below represents a reconstruction of the programme for the festival in its five-day form.[54]

Day 1:

- Swearing of oaths in the Bouleuterion to Zeus Horkios
- Distinction between men and boys and between foals and horses made by the judges (*hellanodikai*)

Day 2:

- Equestrian Events (Chariot-races and horse-races)
- Pentathlon (One event consisting of five disciplines: discus, javelin, jumping, *stadion* and wrestling)

Day 3:

- Sacrifices to the hero Pelops
- Procession
- The major sacrifice to Zeus (one hundred oxen)

Day 4:

- Running events (*stadion*, *diaulos*, *dolichos*)
- Combat events (boxing, wrestling, pankration)
- Hoplite race
- Boys' events (running and combat)

[54] Lee 2001, 24. Lee proposes this schedule based on an excerpt of Pausanias 5.9.3 translated and analysed on pages 14-25. See Lee 2001, 24-25 for how the schedule of events changed over time.

Day 5:

- Awards ceremony
- Banquet

According to de Coubertin, it was in the Classical period after the Games of 472 BC that they began to be held over five days.[55] As can be seen, athletics represented only a part of the festival; religious activity was its main purpose. It was during the classical period that the Olympic festival was at the peak of both its athletic glory and fame and was matched only in religious significance in the Greek world only by the Eleusinian Mysteries.[56] Thousands of Greek men travelled to the sanctuary of Olympia in order to offer prayer to the patron deity Zeus and to witness the greatest athletic spectacle of their time, some travelling many miles each day.[57] Women on the other hand were banned from Olympia during the days of the festival, though the ban did not apply to virgin women.[58]

Note how even in the face of a growing athletic programme, there are no activities that could reasonably be deemed to promote intellectual and moral improvement. At the other Panhellenic festivals we know that there were various musical and poetic competitions aside from athletics but these did not feature at Olympia.[59]

[55] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 251. Pausanias 5.9.3 dates the change to a five-day festival to the 77th Olympiad, which corresponds to the year 468 BC; perhaps he was de Coubertin's source.
[56] Pausanias 5.10.1.
[57] Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.13.5 implies that the journey from Athens to Olympia involved five or six days walking.
[58] Pausanias 6.6.7, Pausanias 6.20.9 says that this did not apply to virgin women. Pausanias 5.8.11 reports that Belistiche was an Olympic victor in both the four-colt and two-colt chariot races in 264 BC but as a woman she would not have been able to witness the race or collect her reward personally.
[59] Plutarch, *Moralia* 675b-c and Pausanias 10.7.2-8 state that musical contests took place at the Pythian Games. Pausanias 8.50.3 and Plutarch, *Life of Philopoemen* 11 state the same for the Nemean Games. Plutarch, *Moralia* 675b states that poetry contests took place at the Isthmian Games. The trumpet and herald competitions were contests of clarity rather than musicality and evolved from being part of the pageantry to becoming events. The Games of the 211st Olympia held in 67 AD (postponed by Nero for two years to align with his visit to Greece) included musical contests in kitharode-singing and tragedy as a one-off due to Nero's influence on the Games (Suetonius, *Nero* 23-24**;** Pausanias 10.36.9; Eusebius, *Chronicle*, 90).

As for moral development, there is no evidence to suggest that this was a concern at the Games and it seems highly unlikely considering both Heracles and Pelops, two athletic heroes associated with the founding of the ancient Games, were revered notwithstanding their moral flaws.[60] Furthermore, Pausanias lists several athletes exposed as cheaters, naming Eupolus of Thessaly's bribery at the 98th Olympiad as the earliest case.[61] Eupolus' name was inscribed on one of the bronze statues, known as the Zanes of Olympia, dedicated to shaming cheaters at the Games. The bases of these statues can still be seen at the site of Olympia. This notion of superior morality at the Games likely developed as a result of the comprehensive idealisation of ancient Greek culture in the West and the view that the ancient Greeks were a superior civilisation.

1.6 Cessation of Hostilities

The official Olympic website dates the tradition of the Olympic Truce back to the 9th century BC in Ancient Greece.[62] This truce has been commonly misunderstood by many others as well as Philemon. The source for this date is not specified but a fragment of Phlegon of Tralles dates the treaty–advocated by the oracle of Delphi–between Iphitus, Cleisthenes of Pisa and Lycurgus to 884 BC when they reestablished the Games founded by Heracles.[63] This highlights the

[60] See Diodorus Siculus 4.73.1-6 for an account of Pelops' treachery in order to defeat Oenomaus with the help of the latter's charioteer Myrtilus. Pausanias 8.14.10-11 suggests that Pelops later betrayed Myrtilus.
[61] Pausanias 5.21.1-17.
[62] International Olympic Committee n.d., *Olympic Truce*. The truce was officially 'renewed' by the IOC at the 1992 Games in Barcelona.
[63] Phlegon and Hansen 1996, 58-59.

inconsistencies in the IOC's rhetoric since they date the beginning of the truce to the 9th century BC but the beginning of the Games to the 8th. The ancient Olympic truce (*ekecheiria*) categorically did not mean a cessation of all hostilities as Philemon suggested; for instance, the Peloponnesian War continued while the Olympic Games were running. The truce declared that it was forbidden to make war on those travelling to or from the Games or to engage in military activity at the Olympic site as they were protected by Zeus. This was not always put into practice though: in the fourth century BC Phrynon of Rhamnus was reported to have been attacked on his way to Olympia by privateers of Philip II of Macedon during the truce.[64] Furthermore, in 362 BC the Eleans actually fought the Arcadians and Pisatans at Olympia in the Altis.[65]

The ancient Olympic truce has likely been misunderstood, in part, because of the difference in attitude towards war in ancient Greece compared to the contemporary West. War was a staple part of ancient Greek life and the truce was not established as a means of reducing its frequency. Rather, it was introduced for practical reasons so that wars did not disrupt the Olympic festival. This seems to not have been fully understood because of the idealisation of ancient Greece. Instead it was thought that the truce was a sign of moral superiority of the Greeks, who had the capacity to make the Olympics central to their whole civilisation, where it transcended both war and peace. This added to the overall narrative of ancient Greek civilisation as exemplary and allowed any organisers of Olympic revivals to replicate this method of curtailing war.

[64] Aeschines, *Speeches* 2.12.
[65] Xenophon, *Hellenica* 7.4.28-33.

1.7 Conclusion

Even this brief examination of the ancient Games reveals the issues that modern scholars must contend with when trying to ascertain what actually occurred at Olympia. There is a limited amount of written evidence, there are no eye-witness accounts and many of the key sources were written long afterwards. However, there is still sufficient material to refute many of the claims Philemon makes about the inherent similarities between the ancient and modern Olympic Games. Philemon's prologue reflects either a lack of knowledge about the ancient Games or an agenda to portray them in a certain manner. Given that he was Secretary General of the HOC for the 1896 Games, the latter is the obvious choice here and the nature of his career beforehand reinforces this.[66] It would have been impossible for him to successfully portray the reality of the ancient Games but what his account shows is that he has not even attempted to do so despite his account being placed in the public sphere from a position of authority. This acts as a pertinent reminder that modern accounts of the Games and ancient Greece should always be looked at critically and not accepted purely on the basis that they appear to be in line with tradition because the events at Olympia, as encapsulations of the society that is seen as a key forerunner of western civilisation, hold a unique sway that is often manipulated. Unfortunately, this manipulation is far from unique to Philemon, as this thesis will show.

[66] Philemon studied law at the University of Athens and was a personal tutor to King George I; a man so well educated and holding such a position probably encountered at least some of the aforementioned ancient Greek sources.

Chapter 2: The Olympic Revivals in England, 1500-1900

2.1 Introduction

That de Coubertin first revived the ancient Olympic Games is a prevalent but misguided line of thought. While he was indeed the pioneer and founder of the IOC's Olympic Games that have become arguably the world's greatest institutionalised sporting event, both he and the IOC have gone to significant lengths to make it seem as if the idea to revive the ancient Games was an original one, brought to life by his invention and in particular his pragmatism.[67] However, the ancient Olympics did not suddenly appear in western thought with de Coubertin's revival; events bearing the title 'Olympic' can be traced back to England as early as the beginning of the 17th century.[68] In fact, one of the key factors in de Coubertin deciding to restore the Olympic Games was a visit to Shropshire where he was a spectator at William Penny Brookes' Much Wenlock Olympian Games in 1890.[69]

This chapter aims to track the construction of the image of ancient Greece and the Olympic Games in England from the first recorded mentions of the ancient Games in English literature in the 16th century up until the end of Brookes' Games since there appears to be a progression through to de Coubertin. It will be split into four sections with the first providing a history of the development of the idealisation of ancient Greece and the Games, which preceded formal Philhellenism. The second

[67] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 311; de Coubertin writes: 'I hereby assert once more my claims for being the sole author of the whole project'.
[68] There were a number of institutionalised sporting contests held around Europe with the titles 'Olympic', 'Olympik', 'Olympick', 'Olympicke', 'Olimpick', 'Olimpicke', 'Olympian', or a similar variant attached (Findling and Pelle 2004, 4-16).
[69] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 281.

section will examine how the Cotswold Olimpick Games, the earliest known Olympic revival, played a role in the definition of national identity and employed Greek antiquity to serve both social and political functions that anticipate the modern Olympics. The following section will investigate the bridge between the Cotswold Games and the Much Wenlock Games, with particular attention to the eighteenth-century English poet Gilbert West's contribution since there are clear similarities between his and Brookes' ideologies. The case of West is a fitting example of how the contentions of scholarship can have a huge influence irrespective of their relationship to the ancient texts from which they are supposedly derived. The final section will investigate Brookes' reception of ancient Greece since several of his views seem to reflect West's interpretations and many of his ideas were employed by de Coubertin in the IOC's later revival.

2.2 The Earliest English Receptions

While several Byzantine works kept the name of the ancient Olympic Games alive in literature such as Polidore Vergil's *De Inventoribus Rerum*, Girolamo Mercuriale's *De Arte Gymnastica* and George Kedrenos' 11th-century account on the banning of the games in *Compendium Historiarum*, the earliest mention of the ancient Olympic games in modern western European literature appears in the 1573 tragedy by French dramatist Robert Garnier titled *Cornélie*.[70] The play was translated into English in 1594 by Thomas Kyd and performed under the title *Pompey the Great, His Faire Corneliaes Tragedie Effected by Her Father and Husbandes Downecast, Death, and Fortune* (*Cornelia*), bringing the memory of the ancient Games to English

[70] Lennartz 1978, 272-273.

theatre for the first time.[71] Kyd makes reference to the Games in *Cornelia* in Cassius' speech to Brutus about Caesar:

> Against the Romains, whom in policie
> He train'd in warre to steale theyr signorie.
> Like them that (striving at th'Olympian sports,
> To grace themselves with honor of the game)
> Annoynt theyr sinews fit for wrestling,
> And (ere they enter) use some exercise.[72]

This excerpt, though short, is extremely revealing. Firstly, Kyd's audience (and Garnier's) must have had at least some knowledge of the Olympic Games for it to be referenced in such an analogical manner. This is unlikely to have been extensive as the reference is placed in parentheses suggesting that it was a non-critical extension of the analogy, but nonetheless here we see the beginning of their association with honour. Secondly, the use of the words 'sports' (Kyd's translation of Garnier's 'jeux') and 'game' show how as early as the late sixteenth century the true ideals of the ancient Olympic Games and their agonistic nature were already beginning to be lost in translation with contemporary misinterpretations creeping in.[73] We are unable to track where Garnier first learnt about the Games but his use of *jeux* suggests it was from either a Latin or contemporary source. Kyd reflects Garnier's interpretation in his own translation.

William Shakespeare also mentions activities at Olympia in a simile of his own. His

[71] Halliwell 1860, 60 and 198.
[72] Kyd 1595, G2.
[73] Garnier 1574, 28. 'Game' is Kyd's own addition as there is no synonym present in Garnier's French.

tragedy *Troilus and Cressida*, believed to have been written in 1601, briefly refers to wrestling at the Games also.[74] Yet it is in *Henry VI, Part III*, written in approximately 1591, where we see Shakespeare also associate the Olympics with honour, potentially influenced by Kyd's earlier usage. It is very possible if not likely that Shakespeare actually read *Cornelia* since he and Kyd were contemporaries and the play was freely available after being published on the Stationers' register on 26 January 1594.[75] In a scene of *Henry VI, Part III*, after Edward Plantagenet, his brother George, and the Earl of Warwick seek respite from battle, George gives a rallying cry to his troops:

> Yet let us all together to our troops
> And give them leave to fly that will not stay,
> And call them pillars that will stand to us;
> And, if we thrive, promise them such rewards
> As victors wear at the Olympian Games.
> This may plant courage in their quailing breasts,
> For yet is hope of life and victory.
> Forslow no longer; make we hence amain.[76]

That George uses the rewards of the 'Olympian Games' to incentivise his troops and to instil courage in them suggests that Shakespeare's audience - like Kyd's - were aware that Olympic victors were rewarded with such a high degree of honour that it was worth risking one's life for. The scene would not have had the desired

[74] Shakespeare 2016, 4.6.196.
[75] Mulryne 2004. Shakespeare certainly read Kyd's most famous work *The Spanish Tragedy*, which has many similarities to *Hamlet*.
[76] Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 3*, 2.3.1117. This excerpt is taken from the First Folio produced using Shakespeare's foul papers. The very first edition of the play is thought to have been written in 1591.

dramatic effect had this not been the case. It is striking how in the three references by Kyd and Shakespeare both mention the Olympics in some type of military context since this foreshadows the military function that English Olympic revivals looked to include. That both entailed physical effort and honour clearly drew them together. The athletics at the Games were first extensively linked to war by Frenchman Pietrus Faber in 1592 in his account of the Panhellenic festivals titled *Agonisticon*. Interest in Greek literature in England was on the rise with volumes of Greek and Roman writers such as Homer, Herodotus, Plutarch and Epictetus translated into English appearing from 1579 onwards.[77] Faber's account was written entirely in Latin and collated every mention of the festivals by Greek and Latin writers that he could locate. We know that West read Faber as he acknowledges him in his *Dissertation on the Olympick Games* affixed to his *Odes of Pindar* but it is not inconceivable that Faber's work had become known to English scholars long before that.

In addition to honour, traits such as chivalry and moral purity began to be emphasised in English references from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the idealised picture of the ancient Olympics developed. English dramatist George Chapman associated 'th'Olympian contentions' with exemplary fairness in his 1608 ten-act play *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*. Chapman's use of 'contentions' instead of 'sports' or 'games' suggests a rare awareness of the nuances of the *agon*, which may have arisen from his extensive knowledge of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which encapsulate the concept of the *agon*.[78] While this interpretation of *agones* has been used sparingly since, the representation of

[77] Williams 2015, 37.
[78] Chapman produced the first complete English translations of the epics in *The Whole Works of Homer* (1616).

the ancient Games with fairness and righteousness has gained considerable traction. Chapman refers to the ancient Eleans as 'the justest arbitrators', an opinion that can be refuted by the reports of Pausanias and Plutarch, even though we know he was extremely familiar with their works.[79] We read in Book VI of *Description of Greece*:

> The statue of Eupolemus, an Elean, is by Daedalus of Sicyon. The inscription on it reveals that Eupolemus was victor at Olympia in the men's stade race… It is also told about Eupolemus that there were three *hellanodikai* appointed to judge the race, and that two of them gave the victory to him, but one of them to Leon of an Ambracia. Leon had the two *hellanodikai*, who had awarded victory to Eupolemus fined by the Olympic Council.[80]

The inference here is clearly that the *hellanodikai* were found guilty of partiality and breaking their oath to Zeus Horkios. The exact reason for their fine is not identified but it is likely that it was either because they unfairly favoured Eupolemus because of his Elean heritage or that they had accepted bribes. Pausanias also provides the example of Troilus who entered and won two chariot races despite being a *hellanodikas* himself.[81] Furthermore, Plutarch alludes to umpires who awarded crowns to the wrong people for improper reasons but he does not elaborate further.[82] This is, of course, not to mention Eupolus of Thessaly's bribery again.

[79] Chapman 1910, 202. Chapman borrowed from Plutarch heavily in writing the poems *The Nuptials of Perseus and Andromeda* (1614), *Caesar and Pompey* (1631) and *Shadow of Night* (1594).
[80] Pausanias 6.3.7.
[81] Pausanias 6.1.4-5.
[82] Plutarch, *Moralia*, 535c.

While these negative accounts are not common by any means they are not so rare as to warrant neglect. There have been multiple famous examples of cheating at the modern Olympics and to imply that the ancient Games were somehow free from this by overlooking these cases is fanciful considering the importance of victory to the ancient Greeks. The reason for this selectivity likely stems from the spread of Renaissance Humanism from Italy through western Europe which pervades post-medieval European cultural and intellectual history.[83] Classical culture and literature–initially that of the Romans in particular–were studied and in turn the learnings of this study became a powerful pedagogic tool. It was in the fifteenth century that Greek texts also began to serve a similar function in Italy.[84] This was likely because of the influence of the Byzantine Greek immigrants that arrived from Constantinople after it was captured by the Turks in 1453, especially humanists such as Manuel Chrysoloras, George of Trebizond and John Argyropoulos who proposed that the Latin literature that was preferred at the time was a mere offshoot of superior Greek literature.[85] The ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, as the subject of these instruments of teaching, were therefore put on a pedestal that encouraged this selectivity. When exponents of the teachings of the Bible quote excerpts they tend to ignore the verses that tell of God's violence even though there are many. Likewise, the aforementioned negative reports about ancient Greek impartiality were often overlooked because they did not fit the growing pro-Greek agenda; ancient Greece had to be made to look near-perfect in order to fulfil the paradigmatic role that was required of it and this even affected

[83] Mann 1996, 2.
[84] Hankins 2003, 265-266.
[85] Ibid. 265. This lay the foundations for the Philhellenism that developed in the eighteenth century largely because of the works of German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. See Hyde 1919 for a summary of how the study of Greek culture escaped the Roman shadow and came to prominence as well as Winckelmann's role.

descriptions of ancient Olympia.[86]

Callebat describes the passing down of Greek antiquity as ‘a complex process of crystallization’ where ‘in the context of an originally diffuse awareness of antiquity, certain elements are crystallized, that have been activated and directed by a specific event or circumstance’.[87] His examples suggest that these events are more grandiose than literary references but the aforementioned references in English literature surely qualify too. It is the morality and honour implied by these references that has been crystallised and become synonymous with the Games and ancient Greece in favour of the impartiality mentioned in ancient sources. This process has had a compounding effect where the more the Olympic Games and ancient Greece are portrayed as archetypal, the more their natural blemishes are removed in the refinement of this archetype. As a result, Pausanias’ and Plutarch’s accounts remain overshadowed by the wealth of positive references that have received modern attention.

2.3 Dover’s Olympics

With the idealistic construction of ancient Greece developing in England, its use as a legitimising tool in the seventeenth century is most clearly evidenced by the Cotswold Games, also referred to as the Cotswold Olimpick Games or Dover’s Olimpicks. Established in 1612 by English lawyer Robert Dover on Kingcombe

[86] Olympia was often described as idyllic but Lucian, *Herodotus or Aëtion* 8 talks of ‘stifling heat’ and Pausanias, 5.14.1 reports that the Eleans were said to sacrifice to Zeus Averter of Flies in order to clear the area of flies, which likely resulted from rotting meat left over after the animal sacrifices that took place.
[87] Callebat 1998, 554.

Plain just above Chipping Campden, the Games were the first major institutionalised athletic festival to use the Olympic title since those held at Olympia in antiquity.[88] The use of the Olympic moniker arose from Dover's classicisation of former rustic festivities and an increased emphasis on both athletic activity and 'competition and prowess' that was reminiscent of the ancient Greek festival.[89] This section will focus on the Cotswold Games as a reception of the ancient Olympics from their inception up until they were interrupted by the English Civil War in 1643.[90] Unfortunately there is not an abundance of source material about Dover's Games during its infancy; we do not have access to any official reports, journalism or correspondence between key figures as with IOC Olympic Games, but the limited evidence available is worth examining nonetheless given that Dover's Olimpicks represent the earliest known starting point of actual Olympic revivalism.

The most important document concerning the Cotswold Games is a collection of poems titled *Annalia Dubrensia: Upon the Yeerely Celebration Of Mr. Robert Dover's Olimpick Games Upon Cotswold Hills*, published in 1636. The collection compiles the poems of contributors from a variety of backgrounds in order to celebrate the Cotswold Games and their founder.[91] The work, for the most part, displays a more acute awareness of the ancient Games than can be seen in English literature prior to its publication and it provides key insights into

[88] Radford 2012, 161 quotes an advertising bill from 1851 stating that it was 'Two Hundred and Thirty-nine years since MR. ROBERT DOVER, instituted the highly celebrated and renowned Olimpic Games'. I use the word 'major' here because The Gog Magog Games held at Cambridge University, which Robert Dover attended, were referred to as 'Olympiks' in 1620 by Symond D'Ewes but it is unknown whether this title was used prior to that (Galligan et al 2000, 59).
[89] It is difficult to say when they were interrupted exactly but Richard Symonds in *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army* writes 'the King and all his army marched over the Cotswold Downes, where Dover's Games were' in an account referring to 1644 (Symonds 1859, 15).
[90] Semenza 2003, 127.
[91] It is fitting that poetry played such a large role in the survival of the knowledge of Dover's Games as the longevity of the glory of the ancient Games owes much to lyric poetry.

the development of ancient Greece's idealisation and the nature of Dover's reception. However, only one poem in the collection is composed by Dover himself and our views on Dover's usage of antiquity arise mainly from his portrayal by others. Eighteen of the poems, as well as Mathew Walbancke's foreword, make explicit reference to the Olympic Games and the collection abounds with references to the glory, bravery and honour associated with them in accordance with Shakespeare and Chapman. Walbancke as editor sets the tone for the work by immediately placing the Cotswold Games and Dover in the context of Olympic revivalism in his foreword, where he refers to Dover as 'an Hero of [his] Age' for reviving the memory of the ancient Games.[92] This is a theme reinforced throughout the collection.

Dover is celebrated as a restorer of the Olympic Games on English soil and the way in which the poets convey this reveals their overall attitude towards ancient Greece; words such as 'restore', 'revive', 'renew' are used in conjunction with Dover's name frequently. Michael Drayton in the first poem juxtaposes Dover with Hercules, as does Thomas Heywood; Richard Wells refers to him as the 'Cotswold Hercules'.[93] In the fourth poem William Denny affords Dover an introduction fit for an ancient Greek hero: 'Time long asleepe, is now awaked by thee / Famed Dover, who began the pedigree / Of Cotswold sports, where each Olimpick game, / Is parraleld and drawes, fresh breath from Fame'.[94] Thomas Randolph and Robert's nephew John Dover compare him to Pan the god of shepherds.[95] These portrayals of Dover demonstrate how impressive his actions were deemed in being able to

[92] Whitfield 1962, 96.
[93] Ibid. 102; 205; 223.
[94] Ibid. 115.
[95] Ibid. 128; 136-137. Thomas Randolph is also referred to as Thomas Randall in other editions of the *Annalia Dubrensia*.

restore something as grand as the Olympics since they portray him as England's hero and in doing so, show how ancient Greece offered the benchmark for virtue and honour.

It is not just Dover that is compared with ancient Greece but his Games are also constantly juxtaposed against the ancient Olympics. For example, Randolph, John Dover, the poet known only as R. N. and Heywood all view Dover's Games as on par with the ancient Games.[96] William Bellas compares the Cotswold Games to the Olympics favourably and Denny believes Dover has outdone all four Panhellenic Games with his Cotswoldian revival, as does Robert Durham, William Ambrose and John Stratford.[97] By claiming that Dover's Games are either comparable to or even superior to the legendary Games of antiquity these poets confer their honour on Dover's revival. Jonson stands out for being unable to bring himself to compare the Cotswold Games with the legendary ancient Olympics, no matter how great his appreciation for Dover's endeavours, such was the virtue of the latter in his eyes– a view that may well have been echoed by Randolph since he does not actually mention the Olympic Games but instead compares the Cotswold Games to the lesser Nemean and Isthmian Games.[98] Notwithstanding, the level of honour both the ancient Games and Dover's Games were afforded was enormous.

Yet, what exactly did Dover restore? What exactly of the ancient Games 'was transferred over / Into [their] Cotswold by [him]'?[99] Was it more than simply the name? To the ancient Greeks the term *Olimpiakos* had no special significance

[96] Ibid. 124-129; 136-137; 213-214; 221.
[97] Ibid. 109-112; 115-118; 159-160; 179-180.
[98] Ibid. 134; 128.
[99] Ibid. 180.

other than denoting that the Games were held at Olympia, but to seventeenth century England it had become shorthand for honour and morality. It is difficult to determine whether the decision to use the term ‘Olimpick’ actually originated with Dover as there is no extant evidence that can be dated to before the publication of *Annalia Dubrensia* that is not contained within the collection itself, but it seems most likely that the name was inspired by Drayton. Since the poems of the *Annalia Dubrensia* were ordered chronologically, it was probably Drayton who first demonstrated this usage in literature as his poem was written in 1631. Dover in his own poem gives little away and his implication that he cannot remember how the idea to host these Games came to him is extremely dubious given the significance of the festival and makes it less likely that he introduced the moniker himself since this poem represented the perfect opportunity to champion this innovation as he does the invention of the Games.[100] Regardless, that Dover approved the name implies that he understood that it would not only legitimise his festival by creating the illusion of a continuation of tradition but also add prestige and nobility that would increase its popularity. Thus, any praise for the ancient Games would also operate as praise for his English athletic endeavours.

The Englishness of the Cotswold Games must be stressed. Rather than replicating the ancient Olympics, they were an adaptation that combined ancient Greek ideals with the contemporary English ones. Some of the athletic events were vaguely similar to those held at Olympia such as running, jumping, wrestling–there was also musical entertainment put on by a man dressed as Homer–but his intentions were

[100] Whitfield 1962, 224: ‘T’invent these sports’. It is difficult to determine whether Dover is referring to the actual events or the Games as a whole here given that terms like ‘sports’ and ‘playes’ are used as we use ‘Games’.

clearly to borrow certain aspects from antiquity and add them to an English base.[101] John Monson's claims that Dover brought back pastimes which people had read about but not seen practised only prove the vagueness of antiquity and suggest that perhaps the Olympic name and a mock-up Homer alone were sufficient to convince the public of the event's Greekness.[102] Denny's poem mentions greyhound racing, hunting, board games, card games, trials of strength involving a pole or hammer and thus we see the events of the festival were restorations of the activities seen at the Whitsun ales that Dover had attended upon moving to the Cotswolds in 1611 fused with a few Greek-inspired elements.[103] Furthermore, the only extant iconographic evidence is the frontispiece of the first edition of the *Annalia Dubrensia* (figure 2.1) but there is nothing classicising about the image in terms of the events it depicts nor its style.[104]

[101] Whitfield 1962, 117: 'While Homer's Embleme on his harpe did play'. See Whitfield 1962, 1 for Michael Drayton's description of the games before Dover apparently revived them.
[102] Whitfield 1962, 199.
[103] Ibid. 115-118. Dover 1877, ix: An epigram of John Heywood that dates back to as early as 1546-56 alludes to 'games' being held in the Cotswolds at least this early.
[104] Williams 2009, 158.

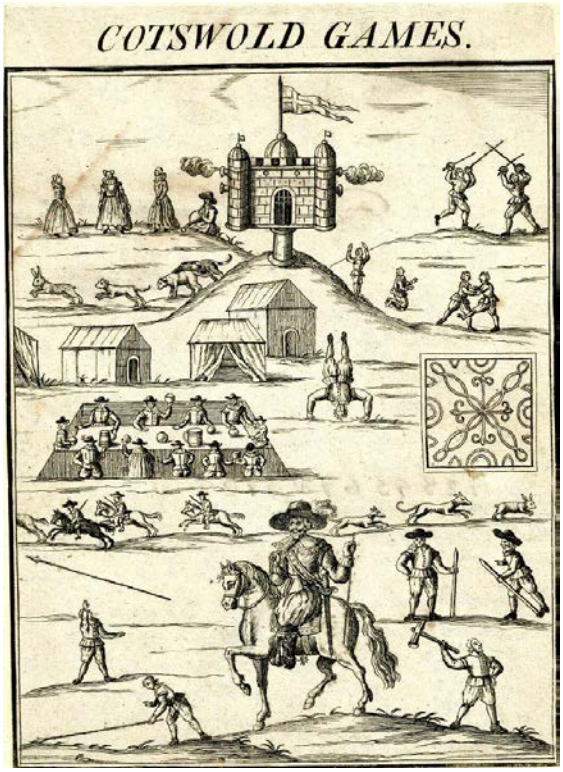

Figure 2.1 The frontispiece of the *Annalia Dubrensia*.

It is instead remarkably English, with people both competing and revelling. The term ‘Olimpick’ does not even feature. Although many contributors claim Dover restored the ancient Games, it is Trussell’s ‘revisement’ that is perhaps most accurate of Dover’s actions; it was the Olympic spirit, with its unifying nature and emphasis on competition and physical betterment, that was restored in an English format so as to revive the same patriotic sentiments inherent to both traditions.

Dover believed that the prosperity of the ancient Greeks was linked to that of the Olympic Games; he states that they went from ‘Unmatchèd… for worth and honour’ whilst the Olympic Games were active to ‘base…not men, but moving lumps of clay’ once they were not and he did not want England to suffer a similar

fate.[105] His words allude to the myth of Prometheus, the Titan who stole the fire of humanity from Zeus in order to create civilisation and gave it to the humans which he had moulded out of earth and water.[106] Here he equates the Olympic Games to the heavenly fire; as a result, he established his Cotswold Games in an English style so as to restore English tradition with the intention of his Games being linked to the nation's well-being in the same manner as the ancient Olympics were to the Greeks. It is difficult to ascertain what exactly 'well-being' entails from Dover's poem alone since he prefers to focus on opposing the Puritan ideology rather than propagating his own; a better view of his motives can be seen from other poems. Stratford, for example, outlines these motives in his poem, noting how the Games strengthened the bonds of love and unity whilst still being 'more warre-like' than the ancient Games.[107] John Cole reiterates this and juxtaposes the concepts of neighbourhood frivolity and war.[108] Jonson commends Dover's Olimpicks for advancing 'true love and neighbourhood' and the unity inspired by the festival is best summed up by Monson's lines: 'Lords, Ladies, Shepheards, Country people all, / Shall speake in praise of Dover's festivall'.[109] All social classes existed in harmony as at the ancient Games but Dover's Games went further by facilitating the presence of both genders in the same sphere. This is encapsulated by the work's frontispiece; it depicts both men and women, people feasting, groups competing, the castle and a figure–which we can only assume is Dover–on horseback with a sword, all in one image.

[105] Whitfield 1962, 223.
[106] Hesiod *Theogony*, 565-566; Hesiod *Works and Days*, 50; Pseudo-Apollodorus *The Library*, 1.7.1
[107] Whitfield 1962, 180.
[108] Ibid. 190.
[109] Ibid. 134; 200.

These suggestions build on the connections between the Games and war made in the early English literary references and in Faber's *Agonisticon* but also foreshadow later works such as West's *Dissertation on the Olympick Games* as a signal of war against enemies but protection towards friends. All that Dover explicitly states himself is that he wishes to promote merriness and oppose the Puritan doctrine. This brings us to Dover's final major use of antiquity. Whitfield in his notes to the poet known as R. N.'s contribution states that 'Dover numbered among his friends men of all faiths and all political and religious fashions, except Puritans'.[110] The Games were a 'conscious protest against the puritanism of the age', which R. N. links to Satan.[111] The Puritans opposed all sport that was played on religious holidays (including Sundays which they worshipped as the Christian Sabbath) and the Games took place on the Thursday and Friday of the week of Whitsun. They also believed that many of the events were of pagan origin and promoted both drinking and gambling.[112] Since these Games were effectively a grander version of the traditional English festivities that had existed previously, Dover viewed the Puritan opposition as a direct an attack on Englishness itself–this position would have undoubtedly been reinforced in his mind by the support he received from King James I.[113] Dover sarcastically refers to them as 'our fine, refinèd clergy' in his own poem and there was perhaps no better way to make a statement against Puritan ideology than to affix the name of the most famous pagan athletic festival to his own sporting event, simultaneously removing any Christian connotations

[110] Ibid. 214.
[111] Whitfield 1958, 95. Whitfield 1962, 213.
[112] Polley 2011, 22.
[113] Wood 1820, 222.

associated with a revival of the Whitsun ales and promoting the benefits of sport?[114] Thus Dover uses ancient Greece as a social tool and a successful religio-political weapon against the Puritans until his Games were halted due to the English Civil War, after which they never possessed the same influence when they were restored by Dover's son, John.[115]

2.4 Bridging Dover and Brookes: Gilbert West's *Odes to Pindar, with several other pieces in prose and verse, translated from Greek: To which is prefixed a dissertation on the Olympick Games* (1753)

After the end of the Civil War references to the ancient Games were infrequent, although John Milton's in his epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) is particularly striking for being a rare portrayal of the Games in a negative light, comparing the activities of the inhabitants of Hell to those held at 'th'Olympian Games', displaying a post-war distaste in line with Puritan thinking.[116] However, during the eighteenth century there was a resurgence in interest in ancient Greece and the Games led by several key Englishmen that ensured that the events at ancient Olympia would never be forgotten to the same degree again. One of these was the poet Gilbert West, whose *Dissertation on the Olimpick Games* provided the first significant coherent history of the Olympic Games since antiquity, drawing on ancient literary sources in a manner far more refined than Faber's indiscriminate approach in his *Agonisticon*.[117] At a similar time those on their Grand Tour started to venture beyond the traditional finishing point of Naples and journey into Greece, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire, in the hope of furthering their knowledge of

[114] Whitfield 1962, 224; Radford 2012, 163.
[115] Semenza 2003, 143.
[116] Milton, *Paradise Lost* 2.530.
[117] See Lee 2011, 109-118 for a discussion on West's contribution to the Olympic revival story.

Greece's antiquities. Two such men were English architects James Stuart and Nicholas Revett who arrived in Athens on 18th March 1751 under the patronage of The Society of the Dilettanti.[118] Following their return to Britain they published the seminal work *The Antiquities of Athens and Other Monuments of Greece* in 1762, providing illustrations and measurements of ancient Greek architecture alongside in-depth descriptions, supplying visual material to accompany the growing amount of literature that existed on ancient Greece. The work proposes Greek classicism rather than that of the Romans as the model for contemporary architecture, something that is furthered by Winckelmann who championed the notion that imitating the ancient Greeks would lead to greatness.[119] Revett returned to Greece with Richard Chandler in 1764 under the society's patronage to document more antiquities and it was on this excursion that they crucially rediscovered the site of Olympia, which Chandler rather underwhelmingly details in *Travels in Greece, or an Account of a Tour Made at the Expense of the Society Of Dilettanti* (1776).[120] Nonetheless, despite Chandler's tone and a delay of ten years between Olympia's rediscovery and the work's publication, from the point of their reaching Olympia, it represented a major milestone that allowed for the subsequent excavations in the nineteenth century that shed so much light on the actual practices at the site in antiquity.

However, from a purely literary standpoint it is West's *Dissertation* that seems to have had the greatest effect on later interpretations of the ancient Games, crystallising certain aspects for future generations. With the publication of his translation of Pindar's *Victory Odes*, West joined a growing list of eighteenth

[118] Colvin 1898, 77.
[119] Piasecki 2018, 3.
[120] Ibid. 84-86.

century scholars who had translated major ancient Greek works into the English language and his dissertation offered a critical review of the ancient sources for the Games that had not been seen before.[121] It is clear that he was eager to understand the political nature of the ancient Olympics because he closes a historically thorough work with a section entitled 'Of the Utility of the Olimpick Games' which concludes thus:

> Sports and Diversions of a People may be turned to the Advantage of the Publick… and may tend to promote Industry, encourage Trade, improve the Knowledge and Wisdom of Mankind, and consequently make his Country victorious in War, and in Peace opulent, virtuous and happy.[122]

First of all, it is striking how much West's words reflect what Dover was trying to achieve with his Cotswold Games but since we are unable to ascertain how well read Dover was, we can only ask whether he dealt with the same sources as West or whether his Games were innovative with West coincidentally echoing his ideals.[123] West's influential conclusion is almost entirely based on the contents of one source, Lucian's *Anacharsis*, an excerpt of which he translates within his dissertation. The work details an imaginary dialogue between the Athenian lawgiver Solon and the Scythian Anacharsis where the former explains to his foreign companion the utility of gymnastic exercises to the Greeks. Solon's overall argument, which West extrapolates, is first that the Greeks engaged in athletic

[121] See Zebrowski 2012, 240 for a list of translations of major works that were published in the seventeenth century before West's *Odes to Pindar*.
[122] West 1753, 275.
[123] Sheldon 1919, 21: 'The earliest extant versions in English of any of Lucian's writings are those of Jasper Mayne and Francis Hicks, published jointly in 1664'. We cannot say for sure whether Dover could read ancient Greek.

exercises in order to not only better themselves but also to better their community; second that constant training makes a man more equipped for battle.[124]

However, there are several issues with West's approach, the first being the reliability of his main source. Lucian's style of writing was often highly satirical and it was not uncommon for him to ridicule public figures–who better than Solon, the legendary Athenian lawgiver? It seems unlikely that West was not aware of this either, since the esteemed English poet John Dryden in 1693 addresses his satirical nature.[125] As a result, it is impossible to determine Lucian's exact stance and for West to interpret Solon's words as he did seems not only unwise but also unexpected considering how critically he examined the myths surrounding the Olympic Games at the beginning of his dissertation.[126] Secondly, Lucian was a Syrian writing in the second century AD under Roman rule while Solon and Anacharsis were sixth century BC figures. Moreover, Diodorus Siculus contradicts Lucian's depiction of Solon in his *Library of the History* saying that Solon thought that boxers and stade runners and all other athletes did not actually contribute to the safety of states.[127] This opinion is one that is shared by accounts from the sixth and fifth centuries BC, namely fragment 2 of Xenophanes and fragment 282 of Euripides' *Autolycus*, which show a similar disdain for athletes and their contribution to their communities.[128] The issue that modern scholars face when dealing with Lucian and Diodorus' accounts is that neither historian is known to be particularly accurate but West does not even consider this in regards to Lucian

[124] West 1753, 215.
[125] Dryden n.d., 70-71.
[126] West 1753, 3-10.
[127] Diodorus Siculus, 9.23.
[128] Xenophanes 1999, 414-417. Euripides 2008, 285-286.

when presenting his claims.[129]

Furthermore, because of Lucian's portrayal of Solon, West believed that to the Greeks the proper reward solely motivated by 'Praise and Glory' because the rewards for victory were wreaths with no monetary value.[130] But how is West so sure that, for example, Anacharsis' laughter at Solon's response that wreaths were the prizes for athletics does not reflect Lucian's own view? This is the same Solon that Diogenes Laertius claims awarded any Olympic victor from Athens with a fixed reward of 500 drachmae.[131] According to the same source Solon actually looked to curtail the honours of athletes in fixing the reward at this amount but because he did not completely abolish the financial reward it suggests that although he may not have been fond of athletes he accepted that they had an important social function. Thus these portrayals of Solon's view on athletics contradict what West infers from Lucian's account.

As we can see from the quotation above, to West the Games solved a whole host of problems for the ancient Greeks and it seems as if his desire to transplant this value into his own age got the better of him at the expense of reviewing his main source with the same critical manner as he did with other sources earlier in the work. Having developed Faber's musings significantly, West's proposal was the first of its kind and its influence on future interpretations of the Games and the utility of sports, both indirectly and directly, cannot be overstated. Yet neither can

[129] Lucian's unreliability has already been discussed. See Diodorus Siculus 1933, xii-xxii for doubts on Diodorus' prowess as a historian.
[130] West 1753, 259.
[131] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers: Solon* 1, 55. *Thucydides* 3.17.4 states that a drachma was the daily wage for a hoplite in the 5th century BC. Aristophanes suggests that half a drachma was the daily wage of a juror, which is just enough for a family of three (*Wasps*, 609, 684, 690, 788-790, 1112).

the fact that his assertions were built on shaky foundations. The extent of the work's influence provides an early example of how clarity and confidence can give off the appearance of accuracy in the eyes of the reader since they have had a significant impact on future receptions of the ancient Games nonetheless, in particular Brookes' Much Wenlock Olympian Games.

2.5 Brookes' Olympian Games

The next major Olympic revival in England appeared in the nineteenth century in the small town of Much Wenlock, Shropshire, courtesy of William Penny Brookes. Brookes was a man of a philanthropic nature whose great love for his local community cannot be downplayed. Born and raised in Much Wenlock, Shropshire, he formed the Wenlock Agricultural Reading Society (WARS), a mechanics' institute of sorts, in 1841 to improve the level of education in his hometown.[132] In February 1850 he formed the Wenlock Olympian Class as part of the WARS before putting on the inaugural Much Wenlock Olympian Games in October later that year at the town's racecourse. Brookes aimed to bring the local community together in a similar fashion to Dover's earlier Olympic revival and his Games echoed West's claims about the Concord and Union sports could encourage.[133] The institution began with events that were typically English and there was little overtly ancient Greek about it other than the name. The majority of Brookes' programme did contain track and field events and the division of races by age category was reminiscent of the ancient Olympics but there were few obviously classicising

[132] Beale 2011, 23.
[133] West 1753, 263.

features initially.[134] However, this began to change considerably from 1859 onwards and the following year the Wenlock Olympian Class split from the WARS to become the standalone Wenlock Olympian Society (WOS).[135] The society's statutes strongly echo West's *Dissertation*: 'The purpose of the Society is to contribute to the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual qualities of the residents of Wenlock through the encouragement of outdoor exercises'.[136]

Just like West, Brookes believed that sports could serve a multitude of functions; the Much Wenlock Games represent the practical application of many of West's theories about the utility of the Games. In fact, the success of the Much Wenlock Games led to similar Games organised by Brookes on a larger scale. First there were the Shropshire National Games introduced in 1861, then the National Olympian Games held in 1866 in London.[137] In 1862 Brookes gave a speech at the Shropshire Games held in conjunction with the Much Wenlock Olympian Games declaring the importance of physical education for the protection of the nation:[138]

> '[W]hy not direct our attention to the physical improvement of those who are to constitute the living defenders of our freedom? I feel sure that the introduction of a system of gymnastic training into our national schools… would be a national good, would be the means of raising up… a race of healthy, active, vigorous youths, a noble, manly race, whose reputation for pluck, bodily power, and endurance, would inspire far more terror on the

[134] Young 1996, 9.
[135] See Young 1996, 18-20 for how the revival of the Olympic Games in Greece influenced Brookes.
[136] See Goff and Simpson 2011, 116-118 for a brief discussion on West's direct influence on Brookes; de Coubertin and Müller 2000, 283-284.
[137] Polley 2011, 46.
[138] Young 1996, 31.

battlefield than the arms they bore.[139]

Though this function is one that is reflected in the Cotswold Games, Brookes' words heavily echo Solon's quoted in West's *Dissertation*: 'These, Anacharsis, are the Exercises in which we educate our Youth… to make them strenuous Defenders of their Country'.[140] The introduction of rifle shooting from 1860 onwards shows Brookes' adaptation of this idea in accordance with contemporary life.[141]

The furthering of education was another function especially important to Brookes; between 1852 and 1854 he organised intellectual activities at the Games for local children that included sewing, arithmetic and writing.[142] Also, while the rewards for victory in events at Much Wenlock almost always included a monetary prize, Brookes began replacing these with the awarding of books for younger contestants.[143] Intellectual events of this kind did not take place at the Cotswold Games nor did they have an ancient basis so they appear to be Brookes' own innovations perhaps inspired by West since the utility of his Games is so similar to that which West proposed, especially in regards to '[improving] the Knowledge and Wisdom of Mankind'.[144]

As Lee states, it is not possible to definitively ascertain whether Brookes read West's *Dissertation* but the fact that he promoted these ideals under the guise of

[139] Young 1996, 31.
[140] West 1753, 231.
[141] Polley 2011, 42.
[142] Ibid. 42-45.
[143] Ibid. 42.
[144] West 1753, 275.

the ‘Olympian’ moniker makes it difficult to believe that he was not influenced by West’s work considering the similarities and that the furthering of education was not a function of the ancient Olympic Games that can be clearly deduced from ancient literature.[145] Furthermore, Brookes was a learned man with a classical education and at the 1877 Much Wenlock Games, he made explicit reference to Pindar in a speech to the competing tilters–West’s translation of *Victory Odes* was said to still be the standard version as late as 1876:[146]

> Gentlemen tilters, your position is indeed a proud and enviable one, privileged to contend for...those olive crowns, emblems of ancient Greece–crowns which… confer upon you an enduring fame for victories won… yet not less worthy to be… celebrated in the verse of some future British Pindar. Were the judges in Olympian Games of old permitted to re-visit earth they would hasten to this classic ground… and when you meet again at the National Games in August next, within the precincts of Salopia’s Altis, the beautiful and far-famed Quarry, and on the banks of its Alpheus, the swiftly-following Severn, come who may against you, you will win again ‘the olive crown and fair renown’.[147]

This speech shows how he looked to present his Games as a continuation of ancient Greek tradition, merging the geography, poets and Games of England with those of ancient Greece. Yet the classicising nature of the Much Wenlock Olympian Games was not always so obvious other than the Olympian title. One can only assume Brookes added it to his Games out of respect for ancient Greece and to

[145] Lee 2011, 116. See Lee 2011, 116-117 for his analysis of whether Brookes read West.
[146] Chambers 1867, 755.
[147] Wenlock Olympian Society n.d., *Minute Book Extracts*. Salopia is an archaic name for Shropshire.

increase the grandeur of his event, since there was little that genuinely resembled the ancient Olympics. Despite the fact that the improvement of Much Wenlock and later England's well-being was Brookes' primary goal, like Dover, he chose the 'Olympic' name for his event. In fact, he refused to drop the 'Olympian' tag even after Lt. Col. Herbert Edwards' suggestion at the inaugural Shropshire Olympian Games in 1860 because he looked to bring back what he thought were the ideals of the ancient Games.[148] Unfortunately we cannot know for certain where Brookes learnt of these ideals but it is difficult to imagine, if West's *Dissertation* was not included amongst his sources, that they were not at least influenced by its assertions.

Despite Brookes' speech above about the continuation of ancient Greece in England, his awareness and support of the revival of the Olympics in Athens in 1859 show that the Much Wenlock Olympian Games were more of an homage than a genuine restoration of a former institution. A column in the *Eddowes's Shrewsbury Journal* informed him of the re-establishment of the Olympic Games in Greece–Brookes added this to his scrapbook and he anticipated the 1859 Athens Olympics by holding his Olympian Games in the same year but now with his admiration for ancient Greece and his own personal ambition boosted by the news of its revival on Greek soil, leading to a clear increase in classicising features.[149] There were victors being crowned with olive wreaths under banners that contained Greek slogans such as *aien aristeuein*.[150] In 1868 a pentathlon was introduced, not consisting of the same events but with a similar structure to the ancient event; the

[148] Young 1996, 26-27.
[149] Ibid. 19.
[150] Wenlock Olympian Society n.d., *Wenlock Olympian Games*.

prize for victory was a medal containing the goddess Nike and an inscription quoting Pindar's *Olympian Odes*: 'there are rewards for glorious deeds'.[151] It is clear that pageantry was important to Brookes and there was no more suitable way to add to this than the embedment of ancient Greek motifs as it raised the profile of the event.[152] The more Greek the event appeared, the more legitimate the ideals that he was supporting seemed in the eyes of the public due to the existing admiration for the ancient Greek civilisation.

2.6 Conclusion

As the next chapter will show, England's role in the Olympic revival story is enormous. This chapter has shown just a portion of this, detailing how the image of ancient Greece has constantly evolved alongside the growth of its idealisation. This unique idealisation combined with a mysterious vagueness allowed organisers such as Dover and Brookes to apply ancient Greece in various ways because it came with a stamp of authority and prestige to all those who knew of it regardless of the level of their understanding. As a result, it had considerable flexibility and could be called upon to tackle social, political and religious issues where required, which in turn provided the blueprint for de Coubertin and the IOC. The vagueness surrounding ancient Greece and the Olympic Games has led to frequent speculation and a freedom for scholars' imaginations where the negative consequences for these scholars are minimal even if the repercussions of their conclusions negatively affect the accuracy of future constructions of ancient

[151] Wenlock Olympian Society n.d., *WOS First Class Medal*.
[152] See Polley 2011, 44 for a photograph of one of several displays at the Wenlock Museum devoted to the Much Wenlock Olympian Games that demonstrates this.

Greece. As has been seen with the final section of West's *Dissertation*, accuracy is far from the key quality affecting whether a piece of scholarship has a lasting influence. It is still difficult to state what is the key quality, though, as the next chapter will highlight.

Chapter 3: The Reception of Pierre De Coubertin

3.1 Introduction

Pierre de Frédy, later Pierre de Coubertin, was born in Paris on January 1st, 1863 into the French aristocracy. He developed an interest in ancient Greece as early as his school days at the Collège Saint-Ignace, a Jesuit-run school on the Rue de Madrid, Paris.[153] It was under the tutelage of Father Jules Carron, a man who spoke with great affection for ancient Greece, the country of philosophers, writers and poets that he received a solid classical education and was introduced to various historical and philosophical texts.[154] Jesuit colleges were distinctive because of the moral formation they offered, which was, after faith and piety, their primary concern. De Coubertin's Jesuit education imparted in him both a passion for ancient Greek civilisation and a desire to affect moral formation, which the modern Olympic Games would later allow him to combine.

The revival of the ancient Olympic Games by de Coubertin is seen as one of the most exceptional phenomena in the history of the classical tradition and the modern Games are regularly seen as a legacy of ancient Greece. David Young declares that the modern Games are in fact 'not so much a revival of the ancient Greek games as a genuine continuation of them' and that the two Games had three major aspects in common: they possessed the 'same spirit', the 'same dedication to the pursuit of excellence', and the 'same goal of bringing out the best in people'; although, arguably, when assessing the spirit of the Games, one is forced to consider both the Games' dedication to the pursuit of excellence and to

[153] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 24.
[154] Schwank and Koch 2005, 38.

what extent there is a goal of bringing the best out in people as part of this assessment.[155] Though these are bold claims and these aspects have very broad meanings which require defining, Young does not elaborate; therefore the aim of the following analysis will be to examine what similarities Young was referring to. This will be achieved by reviewing de Coubertin's reception of ancient Greece as seen through his theories and aspirations rather than any individual instalment of the modern Games, since the initial intended spirit of the Games came principally from his ideas.

De Coubertin's statement in the 1896 Olympic Report that it was not possible for him to invent a name and that 'Olympic Games' forced itself upon him appears to corroborate these claims of similarity. But how ancient were the roots of the IOC-revived Olympic Games in fact?[156] To answer this question, and to ascertain whether the aspects supposedly common to both Games are as similar as Young claims, this chapter will trace the origin of de Coubertin's ideals, examine the growth of his new world philosophy Olympism, and review his use of antiquity, which he developed from the earlier uses seen in the previous chapter. While Dover and Brookes integrated Greek antiquity into their events to actively aid the promotion of their ideals, de Coubertin's method was much more covert. He used ancient Greece in a far more flexible manner often involving disguise and deception. His memoirs, in which a clear change in some of his views on ancient Greece can be recognised, shed light on this. What remained unchanged though was how his desire to convey his message overruled any desire or obligation to remain close to the ancient sources, which, given his prominent position, had a

[155] Young 2004, 140.
[156] Lambros and Politis 1896, 4.

significant distorting impact on future receptions of ancient Greece and the Games across the world.

3.2 Olympism

As described in this dissertation's opening chapter, among a host of other characteristics the ancient Games involved religious ceremony, extreme yet bridled competition, and Panhellenic inclusivity. Looking at how the idea to revive the Olympics was conceived and its subsequent development aids our understanding of the spirit de Coubertin looked to instil in his Games. He did not always have a burning desire to propagate Olympism and revive the institution; indeed, at one stage he was far from an advocate of their restoration. From the beginning of adulthood it was moral reform that was his main motivation and before he realised that the revival of the Games presented an opportunity for effecting his reforms on an international scale he mocked the idea: 'The national league of physical education keeps very busy, it wages war, with ideas redolent of the Olympic Games and visions of formal events at the foot of the Eiffel Tower where the Head of State crowns the heads of young athletes with the wreaths of laurel.'[157] He even once claimed that there was 'no need to invoke memories of Greece or to seek encouragement from the past'.[158] Of course, we know that de Coubertin's opinion changed vastly but it is telling that the turning point for him came after a visit to Brookes at his Much Wenlock Olympian Games in 1890 rather than because of ancient Greece itself. Indeed, England's role in the Olympic revival is even greater than has been previously described since de Coubertin took much from England

[157] De Coubertin 1889, 205.
[158] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 286.

long before arriving at Much Wenlock. Before the idea of the Games' restoration was even a possibility to him, he endeavoured to save France from the outdated educational traditions that he believed were stifling the nation by replacing them with reforms that were heavily inspired by his observations in England prior to his visit to Brookes. These lay the foundations for the ideals that he later wished to promote through the modern Olympics.

De Coubertin first visited England (and Ireland) in 1883 and documented his travels through various educational facilities in his work *L'Éducation en Angleterre* (1888). This provides the earliest insight into the extent of de Coubertin's Anglophilia; despite the rivalry between England and his own country, he praised the English for remaining true to their traditions, while ruing the mistakes being made in France.[159] Speaking of France, he wrote that 'it is possible for a people, deceived, lost, blindly obeying some current of false ideas, to misunderstand its own nature, its destiny, its needs', and he directly juxtaposes these mistakes with the behaviour of the English to highlight their superiority; these words will take on a new dimension at end of the chapter.[160] De Coubertin admired how in the British education system 'the spirit of tradition and spirit of novelty [were] intertwined' and how they had 'grafted the present onto the past', which allowed them to circumvent many of the difficulties that come with the introduction of new ideas, something he took inspiration from in his Olympic revival.[161] While de Coubertin's Philhellenism originated from his Jesuit teaching, his Anglophilia, which was arguably as strong, began after he

[159] Ibid. 53.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.

read a French translation of Thomas Hughes' novel *Tom Brown's School Days* (1856) in 1875.[162] The novel details life at Rugby School during Thomas Arnold's tenure as headmaster and promotes the ideals of Muscular Christianity, which stressed the importance of patriotic duty, the moral and physical beauty of athleticism, discipline, self-sacrifice and manliness.[163] These ideals would go on to form the basis of his proposed educational reforms and his new philosophy-cum-religion Olympism, and this focus on England rather than ancient Greece reflects de Coubertin's overall Olympic ideology. Many of the current modern Olympic ideals that have either been attributed to de Coubertin's invention or said to have been passed down to him from antiquity were actually ideals he transferred from England; de Coubertin explicitly asked that he not be labelled an 'Anglomaniac' but the term is extremely fitting.[164]

De Coubertin's article entitled 'Why I Revived the Olympic Games' (1908) represents the most detailed early presentation of his reasons for restoring ancient Greece's most famous institution. His primary motives, in order of importance, were the promotion of Olympism, the promotion of international peace through athletics and the promotion of amateurism.[165] Thus, dissecting Olympism is essential to ascertaining the spirit of his Games and the extent to which it was the same as at ancient Olympia. In 1918, de Coubertin stated that '[Olympism is] the religion of energy, the cultivation of intense will developed through the practice of manly sports, based on proper hygiene and public-

[162] Guttmann 2002, 8-9.
[163] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 27. Hall 1994.
[164] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 27.
[165] Ibid. 542-5. See 1.4 and 1.6 of this dissertation for the utility of the ancient Olympic truce and the international nature of the ancient Games. Intranational peace, yet alone international peace, was not at all a motive of the ancient Games.

spiritedness, surrounded with art and thought'.[166] According to the Olympic Charter though, 'Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles'.[167] Norbert Müller claims that 'Coubertin reintroduced the religious goals of the ancient Olympic Games into the modern version, essentially without changing the spiritual sense of the Games' but while this may have been de Coubertin's goal, it does not mean he was successful in his efforts. Olympism was closer to a secular philosophy than a full-blown religion and it was nowhere near as critical to the modern Games as the ancient Greek religion was to the ancient Games and those taking part.[168] At Olympia the worship of Zeus was as important as anything else occurring at the festival but by comparison Olympism, although considered vital in de Coubertin's eyes was overshadowed for both the competitors and spectators.

Moreover, the aim to develop a balanced combination of 'qualities of body, will and mind', expressed in the Olympic Charter, clearly hark back to the ideals of Muscular Christianity promoted in *Tom Brown's School Days* and reflect the statutes Brookes used to summarise his Wenlock Olympian Society. De Coubertin himself records these words: 'The purpose of the Society is to contribute to the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual qualities of the residents of Wenlock, through the encouragement of outdoor exercises, and through the annual

[166] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 44.
[167] Ibid. 528.
[168] Ibid. 44.

competition for prizes and medals intended to reward the best literary and artistic productions, as well as the most remarkable feats of strength and skill'.[169] The similarities present are more than clear and bring the ancient basis of the modern Games into question as Olympism appears to be not only modern but very English rather than ancient Greek as the neologism suggests. Returning to Philemon's words in his prologue to the 1896 Olympic report where he describes de Coubertin's Games as 'being founded on eternal principles which the Greeks laid down for the appreciation of the moral and physical improvement of all free citizens', it is clear that the suggestion here is that there is a continuation from ancient Greece rather than from England.[170] But what exactly were these principles if not Olympism, claimed to be eternal, which we know was a modern creation? The imprecise nature of the language Philemon uses reflects their obscurity and sets up even the loosest link to antiquity to immediately benefit from the support of ancient Greece.

A prime example of the almost free rein figures like de Coubertin had in using antiquity for their own agenda is demonstrated by his staunch defence of the English emphasis on the role of sport in education during a speech in Paris on April 18, 1887, to the members of the Société d'Économie Sociale in which he quotes Juvenal's *Satire* X: 'Sports… happy balance in the moral order, *mens sana in corpore sano*, as the ancients used to say'–it was this ideal that was 'syncretized and formulated' into Muscular Christianity.[171] De Coubertin's loose and ever-adaptive use of antiquity is here displayed as he merges all ancient civilisations

[169] Ibid. 283-284.
[170] Lambros and Politis 1896, unpaginated prologue.
[171] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 114. White 2011, 6.

into the term ‘the ancients’, his disregarding the phrase’s precise origin and his focusing on the point that the status of ‘the ancients’ as ancestors immediately made them superior and thus validated the phrase. It does not seem to matter that the Roman poet’s quotation had nothing to do with sport or health at all and the phrase was not used in a sporting context until Englishman John Hulley first used it with the meaning ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’ as the motto for his gymnasium in the 1850s.[172] The quote nonetheless found its way into Olympic rhetoric as a summary of de Coubertin’s views on athletics and became something of an Olympic mantra promoted by IOC president Avery Brundage.[173] Again, it does not seem to matter that there is no evidence in the ancient texts of ancient athletes who were as proficient intellectually as they were physically nor of athletes desiring to be so.[174]

However, though Philemon’s words and de Coubertin’s choice of the name ‘Olympism’ were likely just a means of employing ancient Greece for legitimation, what makes matters even more complex is that there are similarities between the ideals of Brookes’ Games and Muscular Christianity, from which Olympism is derived, and the Greek socio-political concept *kalokagathia*. De Coubertin has frequently been said to have propagated *kalokagathia* through his Olympic revival; Buchanan and Mallon go as far to say that he studied *kalokagathia*.[175] *Kalokagathia*, a composite word made up of *kalos kai agathos* (beautiful and good), represented a state of physical and moral excellence which, being a product of an

[172] Polley 2011, 57.
[173] Brundage n.d., 23.
[174] See Young 2005, 27-31 for several accounts that denigrate athletes and their dedication to improving their physical prowess.
[175] The motto of the 11th International Pierre de Coubertin Youth Forum was ‘*Kalokagathia* – harmony of body, will and mind’, such is his association with the concept. Buchanan and Mallon 1995, xcv.

entire culture, was extremely difficult to recreate in the modern world.[176] One would be hard pressed to find explicit evidence in the ancient sources for *kalokagathia* being a goal of the ancient Olympics and even more so to find de Coubertin himself using the term. A letter to de Coubertin written on August 14, 1912 by the German diplomat to France, Franz von Reichenau, does contain the phrase however: 'I believe in the noble *kalokagathia* of the ancient Greeks...namely harmony, or even better, proper balance between man's intellectual and physical strength'.[177] This proves that, at the very least, de Coubertin did have some cognizance of the notion but the fact that he does not explicitly mention the concept elsewhere in his writings or the official discourse of the IOC before or during the inaugural Games should call into question whether de Coubertin was really advocating *kalokagathia* at all. It was assumed that *kalokagathia* must have been what he was promoting because the ideals he was actually promoting were considered similar and the term was of ancient Greek origin. This would have suited de Coubertin perfectly as it was a ready- made disguise and he never intended to restore the ancient Games in the sense of replicating what had come before. As long as ancient Greece served this legitimising role, de Coubertin did not overly concern himself with accuracy and specifics since they were protected by both the vagueness of antiquity and the authoritative nature of the classical tradition; Coubertin himself seems to acknowledge this in his claim that the patronage of classical antiquity provided a 'hallow of greatness and glory' to his claims.[178]

Regardless of whether he was trying to benefit from the ambiguity surrounding

[176] Wiedemann and Gardner 2002, 11-13.
[177] Callebat 1998, 562.
[178] Lambros and Politis 1896, 4.

kalokagathia and use its ancient nature to his advantage or genuinely trying to promote it as part of Olympism, de Coubertin was guilty of fabrication and he occasionally claimed that it had ancient roots. In a lecture given in Paris on 6th March 1929 he talks of 'bringing Olympism back to life'; in the final chapter of his *Olympic Memoirs* from 1930 he refers to 'ancient Olympism'.[179] His own rhetoric constantly implies continuity and is rife with deception or poor scholarship.[180] In his letter addressed to the Young Athletes of All Nations in which he discusses the motives for 'restoring an institution that dates back twenty-five centuries' in the hope that the athletes would 'become, once again, adepts of the worship of athletics as [their] great ancestors conceived it'.[181] The ancient Greeks did not worship athletics as a contemporary devotee to Olympism would though; rather they worshipped Zeus. Furthermore, de Coubertin's claims about the moral irreproachability of the athletes at Olympia–a method of legitimising the educational value of 'good example [and] social responsibility' that Olympism seeks to highlight– have already been refuted; while he acknowledges that ancient athletes were required to take oaths in front of Zeus Horkios before competing, this was not too dissimilar to the modern Olympic Oath in that it quickly lost its significance and became merely ritual.[182] De Coubertin was a talented man with many skills but detailing accurate ancient Greek history was certainly not one of them. It is therefore difficult to see how the spirit of the modern Games could be deemed so similar to that of the ancient Olympics when de Coubertin's lack of knowledge is a fundamental problem. If we add to this the issue of the 'religious' aspect of the modern Games being questionably religious at best and the fact that the promotion

[179] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 571; Ibid. 747.
[180] One might argue that is poor scholarship rather than deception but this will be treated later.
[181] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 560.
[182] De Coubertin and 1897, 111-112. Wendl 1995, 4-5.

of Olympism was at the core of these Games even though the philosophy-cum-religion did not exist at the ancient Olympics, it is difficult to see where these similarities lie. This is without yet discussing the likenesses of the dedication to the pursuit of excellence and the goal of bringing out the best in people at both Games.

3.3 Amateurism

> Here it was again—the same old question! It was sixteen years now since we had rather naively thought that we had settled the whole matter, and here it was again, the same problem, just as elusive as ever—popping up again like a water polo ball that slips and slides out of your grasp like a cat, to end up taunting you just out of reach. Personally, I wasn't particularly concerned. Today I can admit it; the question never really bothered me. [Amateurism] had served as a screen to convene the Congress designed to revive the Olympic Games. Realising the importance attached to it in sports circles, I always showed the necessary enthusiasm, but it was an enthusiasm without real conviction.[183]

Thus de Coubertin revealed his true thoughts on the concept of amateurism, admitting that although its promotion was integral to his modern Olympic revival, many of his earlier words on the topic were not representative of his true beliefs. As suggested by Lincoln Allison, 'amateurism [may] be variously considered to be about doing things for the love of them, doing them without reward or material gain

[183] De Coubertin 1977, 412.

or doing them unprofessionally'.[184] Much like Olympism, amateurism was a modern phenomenon with English origins and the theory of ancient Greek amateurism is one of *the* great Olympic mistruths, exposed as a myth by Young in his book *The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics* (1984). Young attributes its birth to Irish classical scholar John Mahaffy's quote in *Old Greek Athletics* (1879):

> [T]he term athletic was used by the Greeks for that professional development which they reprehended as the exaggeration of the older gymnastic, with its accompaniment of public games (agonistic) at which contests were amateur performances, and which were for centuries the glory and the pride of Greece. Thus athletics was rather a low thing among the Greeks, who looked upon 'running for the pot' with a highbred contempt.[185]

Mahaffy's reception of Greek athletics was heavily influenced by his individual view of sport, which in line with the beliefs of the upper and middle classes of England at the time, placing amateurism above professionalism.[186] It is to this time and this nation that Coubertin himself says that one must look in order to understand the true meaning of amateurism in his *Olympic Memoirs*.[187] In England, amateurs were effectively middle and upper class men who played sports without payment; they played in a certain way that supposedly demarcated them from the working class. Since the vast majority of the working class could not afford to compete without

[184] Allison 2001, 3.
[185] Young 1984, 45.
[186] Huggins 2004.
[187] De Coubertin 1977, 413.

monetary reward, amateurism functioned as a classist tool that effectively excluded them from participating. Mahaffy started a narrative where amateurism preceded professionalism and where the latter concept represented a decline from the former due to increased participation of the working class.[188] Yet, this had no real Greek basis; Coroebus of Elis, the traditional first ever victor of the *stadion* at the ancient Olympics was said to be a cook and Aristotle talks of an Olympic victor who used to be a fishmonger.[189]

Examining the etymology of both the terms 'athletic' and 'agonistic', language used by Mahaffy himself, the word 'athletic' derives from the ancient Greek *athletes* meaning competitor for a prize and 'agonistic' derives from *agon* meaning a contest for a prize. Prizes were an essential part of the competition, whether they were tangible or not. As stated previously, Solon, even if he did reduce their value, refused to remove the monetary prizes for Olympic victors completely. In addition, an Athenian inscription from c. 429-424 BC stated that athletic and equestrian victors from the Olympic Games would receive a free meal in the city prytaneion every day for the rest of their lives–hardly a show of contempt.[190] How then was Mahaffy allowed to propagate such a theory with little backlash when he was presenting opinions 'which [attempted] to adapt antiquity to [his] taste, scholarly desires and artistic ideas', a practice that German classicist Friedrich Wolf once described as 'the most pernicious' of obstacles to 'genuinely historical research'?[191] His scholarship supplanted the Greek ideals with English ones,

[188] This is supported by Gardner 1892, 301.
[189] Athenaeus 382b. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric* 1.7.
[190] *IG* I^3 131.
[191] Martindale 1993, 6. See Young 2005, 23-24, who gives the example of E.N. Gardiner, for the power leading scholars have in successfully making claims even when they are backed up with little conclusive evidence.

creating a myth that not only had a huge impact on future receptions of the ancient Games but also the way in which the modern Games themselves operated– amateurism was almost obsessively enforced, especially during Avery Brundage's tenure as president of the IOC and the myth was not properly refuted in depth until the publication of Young's book.[192]

Amateurism in Victorian England placed heavy emphasis on fair play to the point where it was deemed as important as the actual result of the contest, if not more so. The very nature of amateurism in its opposition to pure competition would have been incomprehensible to an ancient Greek athlete; there is no explicit mention of amateurism or a similar concept in the ancient sources. Young's claims that there was the same dedication to the pursuit of excellence at both the ancient and modern Olympics must therefore be false considering that amateurism inherently limits the level of excellence that an athlete can achieve; the same can be said for the goal of bringing out the best in people. The ancient Games sought to bring out the best in the competing athletes, placing those from all around the Greek world against each other in front of Zeus and their peers. Though Young does not clarify, these aspects must relate to greater morality partially because this was one of de Coubertin's key aims but also because inspiring and achieving true athletic excellence was naturally curtailed by amateurism's importance to the Olympic movement. At ancient Olympia, victory was of critical importance and the method was irrelevant as long as it did not involve a breach of the rules; there are even

[192] See Allison 2001, 23: Jim Thorpe defeated Brundage at the 1912 Olympic Games in the pentathlon and Brundage was successful in having him disqualified because he had played professional baseball.

examples of ancient athletes winning without competing.[193] The rewards for victory were too great and the shame associated with defeat was too severe for athletes to not push themselves to their limit.[194] The epinician genre of lyric poetry was a direct product of the importance attributed to athletic victory; poets such as Pindar and Bacchylides were commissioned to celebrate athletic victory.

The extent of ancient Greek literature available that disproves Mahaffy's theory makes it scarcely believable that it could have gained the prominence that it did. Nevertheless, it became accepted to the point where these ancient sources that refuted amateurism were ignored in place of interpretations of other extracts that suited. Supported by the scholarship of Percy Gardner and E. Norman Gardiner, Mahaffy's claims led to an increased passion for amateurism which spread across the elites of Europe which acted as the wind to the sails of de Coubertin's revival.[195] He had previously proposed an Olympic revival in 1892 with little success; but by tailoring the 1894 Sorbonne Conference around defining amateurism and adding the discussion of the revival of the Olympic Games to the agenda at the second time of asking he finally secured the result he desired.[196] Crucially, de Coubertin made amateurism a foundation of his revival even though he knew that it had no ancient basis.[197] Within the large catalogue of de Coubertin's written works, he does not once suggest looking at the ancient texts for understanding of the concept.[198] The closest he comes to doing so is in the 1913

[193] See fig. 115 in Miller 2004, 64. Akmatidas of Sparta was said to have won the pentathlon in 500 BC *akoniti*, 'without contest' (literally 'without dust').
[194] See Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, 8.83-87; *Olympian Odes*, 8.69-70; *Fragments*, 214 for the shame of defeat.
[195] See Gardner 1892 and Gardiner 1910.
[196] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 302.
[197] Ibid. 521: 'There is not and never has been any such thing as amateurism'.
[198] The fifth IOC president Avery Brundage claimed the ancient athletes at Olympia were 'strictly

edition of *Revue Olympique* in which he wrote: 'Olympism evokes the specter of … patriotic professionalism. Ancient Greece was familiar with it, and we do not really know if the Greeks managed to find a solution to it'.[199] Although he does not explicitly mention amateurism, the claim that its antonym was present means that amateurism must also have been present by definition, as the two concepts cannot exist without each other. He was aware that the terms 'amateur' and 'professional' are nothing more than modern anachronisms, which when applied to the ancient Games make little sense.[200] He even admits as much in his *Olympic Memoirs* originally published in 1937: 'We know that such selflessness was a façade. A winner, whose trip to Olympia often was paid for by his home town, received all sorts of honors and advantages upon his return. It was not uncommon for an athlete to receive a life annuity, or to be exempt from taxation', which would have of course disqualified ancient athletes from competing at the modern Olympic Games.[201] De Coubertin in typical opportunistic style used amateurism to his advantage, frequently adapting his views and willing to detail perspectives that did not reflect his own true ones, if the moment required it. When he claimed that it was impossible not to use the title 'Olympic' for his revival perhaps it was not because of the 'blatant' continuity between the Games, but rather because without the patronage of antiquity, it is unlikely that the Games would have been able to develop internationally in the way that they did. In this sense, the Games are more similar in spirit to the Brookes' Games at Much Wenlock or even Dover's held in the Cotswold hills, albeit an international version, than of the Games held at ancient Olympia–they are just another modern athletic festival with the Olympic

amateur' but his legacy cast a shadow back over the entire history of the IOC due to its inexorable relationship with amateurism and its constant promotion of the classical tradition (Young 2004, xi).
[199] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 646.
[200] Ibid. 747.
[201] Ibid. 252.

moniker attached.

Chapter 4: Modern Greece and the Athens Olympics

4.1 Introduction

At the 1894 Sorbonne Congress that approved the IOC's revival of the Olympic Games, Demetrios Vikelas addressed the international delegates present with the following words: 'There are no foreigners here, there are only grand-children of ancient Hellenes, cousins gathered by the memory and in the name of common ascendancy.'[202] His aim was the promotion of a Eurocentric internationalism by appealing to the western classical tradition and the repetition of the familiar notion that ancient Greece is a superior ancestor. Vikelas' assertion that the delegates were all descendants of the ancient Greeks requires investigation. The shared opinion of contemporary Philhellenes was that there was at least some form of relation between western Europe and ancient Greece, if not by blood then certainly by tradition.[203] Even for the Greeks themselves, there was no conclusive evidence at the time that they were directly related to the ancient Hellenes; the relationship had been assumed on the basis of linguistic continuity and the fact that Greece was home to ancient Greek archaeological relics.

This chapter will explore how the Greeks employed ancient Greece and the ancient Olympics in the formation of their national identity from the beginning of the Greek Revolution until the conclusion of the 1896 Olympic Games. It will be split into three sections. The first will track the construction of ancient Greece by the western

[202] Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques 1984, 1.
[203] As well as western Europe, the United States of America were also proponents of the classical tradition.

European Philhellenes that was passed onto modern Greece. It will argue that the theory of a continuity between themselves and the Hellenes of antiquity was used as legitimation of the Greeks' right to be an autonomous state; this theory was actually originally driven by the nations of western Europe rather than from within Greece itself. The second section will review the initial revival of the Olympic Games within the context of the ancient-modern continuity and argue that the Greeks used ancient Greece as a comparand so as to bolster their own reputation in the eyes of the West. The Greeks were aware that by promoting their ancient heritage they would be faced with a delicate balancing act, the result of which could define Greece's reputation. Since the western European view of ancient Greece was so idealised, adhering to this comparative method increased the risk of the nation trapping itself in the shadow of its illustrious ancient history, unable to establish an identity greater than being just the home to the 'grand-children of the ancient Hellenes'.[204] On the other hand, hosting these modern revivals gave Greece the opportunity to show that it had surpassed its ancestors in some respects. The final section will review how the Greeks took advantage of the 1896 Athens Olympic Games to consolidate the continuity they proposed between themselves and the ancient Hellenes. The profile of the IOC's Games was larger than anything that had come before and presented an opportunity to exhibit their nation and its ancient past to the world.

4.2 The Revival of Greece

Vikelas' words at the 1894 Sorbonne conference echoed those found in the

[204] Although I have tried to avoid it where possible, that the term 'modern' is attached to 'Greek' and 'Greece' so frequently. Shows how the term 'Greece' alone often evokes thoughts of ancient Greece over modern Greece.

preface of Percy Shelley's poem *Hellas* (1821). The English poet summarised the state of contemporary Philhellenism thus:

> We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece. But for Greece … we might still have been savages and idolators… The Modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings.[205]

This section argues that Greece's reception of the ancient Greeks was so heavily idealised because it was directly influenced by the reception of the Philhellenes of western Europe. As expressed by Shelley, the ancient Greeks were believed to have been the principal cultural ancestors of contemporary western society and therefore there was a reluctance on the part of these Philhellenes to portray them in a balanced manner to avoid drawing attention to any unfavourable aspects–a method reminiscent of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century English treatment of ancient Greece. Furthermore, the western European Philhellenes believed that the Greeks were the genealogical descendants of the revered ancient Hellenes and thus when the Greeks eventually learnt of this heritage they took a similar idealistic approach that was, if anything, even more intense. This relationship would go on to play a critical role in the establishment of Greece's independence and the subsequent formation of its national identity. It is therefore necessary to track the construction of ancient Greece that modern Greece inherited to understand just how extreme this idealism was and the impact this had on the modern Greeks' use of antiquity.

[205] Shelley 2002, 431.

Over the course of many centuries of Ottoman subjugation, while Greece's knowledge of its glorious past remained, its prominence had diminished significantly. However, it was renewed, in part, thanks to the growth of Philhellenism in the West in the early 19th century and the growth of revolutionary nationalism influenced by the French Revolution. Due to the cultural debt that the West believed it owed to Greece's ancestors, the Greek War of Independence, which officially began on the 25th March 1821, was followed closely. Up until the breakout of the war, Philhellenism had been strictly intellectual but within several countries individual Philhellenic societies began to form which transformed the movement into something more active and political.[206] There was still a large increase in Philhellenic literature, in particular in France, as a result of the outbreak of the war but this was eventually coupled with practical aid.[207] For example, the London Philhellenic Committee loaned Greece £800,000 in 1824 and £2,000,000 the following year.[208] This culminated in high-profile figures such as English poet Lord George Byron and American abolitionist Jonathan P. Miller fighting for the Greek cause, confirming the new political edge to Philhellenism.[209] The latter took Shelley's 'we are all Greeks' claim a step further by not only learning the modern Greek language but even adopting a Greek boy.[210]

Evidently, a sympathy, bordering on an obsession, with the modern Greek aim of

[206] St Clair 1972, 52-53. See St Clair 1972, 67-74 for the lengths that certain Germans went to in order to reach Greece and fight on their behalf. It is impossible to trace the exact origins of Philhellenism but the works of art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann were fundamental to its development.
[207] St Clair 1972, 53: Between 1821 and 1827 at least one hundred and twenty-eight separate books of Philhellenic verse were published in France alone.
[208] Wynne 2000, 283.
[209] Lord Byron died of illness in Missolonghi in 1824, effectively giving his life for the Greek cause.
[210] St Clair 1972, 338; Ibid. 342.

securing independence from Ottoman rule was growing within western Europe because of this assumed ancestry. Yet, this rapidly became warped by a fanaticism that led to the development of a narrative that vilified the Turks for oppressing the descendants of such a revered civilisation; the Greeks were no longer being seen as distinct from the ancient Hellenes but rather as the inhabitants of a nation whose history included the glories of antiquity. As a result, this idealised past had the capacity to vindicate their unscrupulous actions in a similar fashion to how it had for the ancients. During the spring of 1821 the Greeks massacred around twenty thousand innocent Turks at Tripolitsa in the Peloponnese 'without qualm or scruple'.[211] Such events were either omitted or heavily distorted by Philhellenic writers creating a dichotomy between the civilised Greeks whose actions were seen as 'valorous, wise and admirable' and the savage Turks whose behaviour was 'cruel, cowardly and offensive'.[212] However, based on Shelley's own explanations of the term 'savage' it is difficult to differentiate between the actions of the Greeks at Tripolitsa and those that would be expected of the antecedent 'savages' referred to in *Hellas*. In his *Defence of Poetry* (1821) he proposes that '[t]he savage ([who] is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner'.[213] Furthermore, he claims in *Speculations on Morals* (1818) that the mind of an infant, a solitary beast and more importantly a savage 'is incapable [of] receiving an accurate intimation of the nature of pain as existing in beings resembling itself', highlighting their primitiveness.[214] However, such was Shelley's

[211] St Clair 1972, 1. See St Clair 1972, 43-45 for more explicit details of the Greek actions during the massacre of Tripolitsa.
[212] St Clair 1972, 144. See Blaquiere 2014, 145-146 for a pro-Greek account that underplays the wickedness of the Tripolitsa siege.
[213] Shelley 2002, 511.
[214] Shelley 1840, 259.

fanatical level of support, these actions by the Greeks did not stem his enthusiasm for their cause–nor that of many others, which at this point makes his stance look paradoxical if not hypocritical.[215]

Yet, if we consider his deliberate ignorance of this massacre alongside several reports from ancient sources and their treatment, what is really meant by the term 'savages' in *Hellas* is more easily understood. According to Herodotus, the Spartans were said to have massacred 6,000 Argives by burning them alive in 494 BC; Thucydides also reports that Athens was also guilty of multiple massacres.[216] All of these events occurred in the esteemed Classical era of Greece that was often used as a metonym for ancient Greece on account of its supposed glory, yet these events have received relatively little treatment because they do not endorse the idealised image of Greece that western Europe was so keen on portraying. Scholarship on Classical Athens focuses on exactly what is mentioned in *Hellas*: its laws, its literature, its philosophy rather than certain Athenian generals slaughtering innocent children and we see the same method of ignoring negative accounts used with modern atrocities in order to maintain the Greek ideal.[217] And so, such is the level of idealisation, what Shelley means by the term 'savages' in *Hellas* is any of those peoples devoid of ancient Greece's civilising influence, namely the inhabitants of western Europe that existed prior to contact with ancient Greek antiquity but more significantly the present day Turks.

It was just before the beginning of the war that the Greeks fully became aware of

[215] Beaton 2013, 91.
[216] For the Spartans' massacre see Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, 6.76-82; 8.148. For Athens' see Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 3.36; 5.32; 5.116.
[217] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 7.27.1-2; 29-30.

these Philhellenic beliefs, mainly as a result of the flourishing mercantile class that traded throughout the Mediterranean, the Balkans and central Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[218] The wealthiest of these merchants sponsored the attendance of young Greeks at universities in western Europe and subsidised the publication of books that contained western ideas, giving rise to a generation of intellectuals that were aware that their people were the inheritors to a heritage revered throughout the West.[219] It was not long until this knowledge filtered through the larger Greek community, who quickly displayed a similar level of reverence. After centuries of Turkish occupation, the re-emergence of Greece's glorious ancient past gave the Greek people something positive to rally round and they quickly began the process of reworking modern Greece to connect it to the Greece of antiquity: many Greeks began naming their children after ancient Greek figures, others changed their own name in this manner.[220] Some even championed a return to the Attic Greek of the classical era as the spoken language because they felt it was more pure.[221] This was symptomatic of the nation's desperation for validation and by the time the war had begun the nation's progonoplexia (an obsession with one's ancestry) and its worship of its ancient past had reached obsessive levels–inflamed by the fact that their cause was actively supported by western Europeans.

Following the conclusion of the war in 1830–Greece became an independent kingdom in 1832– the nation's ancient past remained at the forefront of public consciousness. The newly autonomous Greek state was then eager to

[218] Clogg 1992, 23-27.
[219] Ibid. 26-28.
[220] Ibid. 28.
[221] Ibid.

consolidate a Greek identity that integrated the ancient-modern continuity. Even though it was unprovable given the contemporary level of technology, once the theory had filtered through Greece it was treated as if it were an established fact. The amount of literature that described ancient Greece as the progenitor of western civilisation and the lengths western Philhellenes had gone to in supporting the Greeks as direct descendants acted as all the validation they required. However, it was vehemently challenged in Austrian scholar Jakob Fallmerayer's work *History of the Morea Peninsula during the Middle Ages. Part one: Decline of the Peloponnesian Hellenes and repopulation of the empty land by Slavic peoples* (1830) in which Fallmerayer controversially declared that there was a clear break between antiquity and modernity in the Greek story and that the ancestors of the modern Greeks were not the much-celebrated ancient Greeks but rather the 'Scyths, Slavs or Arnauts, Almugavarians or Franks or hellenised Asiatics from Phrygia' who had colonised Greece in the Byzantine period and broken the Greek bloodline.[222] Not only did Fallmerayer attack the main justification for the Greek nation's right to exist as an autonomous state but he also undermined european Philhellenism.[223] These claims provoked much needed historiographic investigations that had not yet been carried out because there had been no real need to, with the idea of Greek continuity being uncontested up to this point.

Unsurprisingly, the work sent shockwaves through Greece; Fallmerayer was seen as an enemy of the state and labelled a hater of Greeks for his claims. Though often referred to as an anti- Hellene by the Greeks, Fallemerayer did actually

[222] Thumb 1914, 23.
[223] See Lazaridis et al. 2017 for research that suggests that the modern Greeks may actually

respect the glories of ancient Greece, his issue instead lay with the modern Greeks claiming relation to this glorious civilisation. His work, effectively attempting to deny Greece of the lifeline Philhellenism had introduced it, attacked Greece's new core and inspired the nation to embark on a patriotic mission to defend their nation's lineage. The immediate response was not to refute Fallmerayer's claims with evidence– as there was nothing close to conclusive at the time–but instead to restructure the country to make it appear more like the natural ancestor of ancient Greece, therefore rebuking Fallmerayer's claims about the cultural differences between the modern and ancient Greeks. Athens was chosen as the capital city in 1834 because of its ancient history and it was rebuilt in a neoclassical style; streets and squares were given ancient Greek names, as were the city's newspapers and journals.[224] Furthermore, a form of Greek known as Katharevousa (literally 'purifying') was introduced by Adamantios Korais for official purposes to serve as a compromise between Ancient Greek and the vernacular Demotic Greek that he believed had been corrupted by Ottoman rule.[225] The initial strategy for the establishment of Greece's new national identity essentially consisted of clothing the nation in the glory of Greek antiquity rather than promoting the nation as something new and respectable in its own right, which although it may have made Greece's history seem integrated to future generations viewing Greece, did not actually confront Fallmerayer's present claims.

In the meantime, Greek scholars were working in various fields on collecting evidence that refuted Fallmerayer's assertions. In 1843 Constantine Paparrigopoulos published his first historiographical work entitled *About the*

[224] Voutsaki 2003, 240-241.
[225] Mackridge 2010, 7.

emigration of Slavic tribes in the Peloponnese in which he directly debunked Fallmerayer's claims.[226] In doing so, he integrated both the Ancient Macedonian and Byzantine period into Greek history, the latter of which represented a void between antiquity and modernity in Greek history that Fallmerayer was attempting to fill. In 1852 archaeologist Kyriakos Pittakis published a series of articles called *Materials to be used as proof of the continuity of the Greek race* in *Archaiologike Ephemeris* in which he traced elements of the Classical past through Greek folk culture.[227] Spyridon Zambelios built on these works later that year by coining the syncretising term 'Helleno-Christian' in his work *Folk songs of Greece published with a historical study on medieval Hellenism*, implying the unbroken continuity from ancient to modern through Byzantium, and like Paparrigopoulos, he proposed that there was a transition of Greekness through the Middle Ages rather than an interval.[228] He also traced a linguistic continuity through Greek folk songs in his *Whence is Derived the common word 'I sing'*, a piece published in 1859 that argued that modern Greek folk songs retained the spirit and sense of Attic tragedy, with the analysis of the etymology of the Greek word *tragudho* forming the basis of his argument.[229] Although none of these works can be deemed conclusive proof, they were at least nationalistic rebuttals of Fallmerayer's claims and reinforced the merger of the histories of ancient Greece and modern Greece into one coherent chronology. Ultimately, the construction of Greece's national identity depended on this coherence since Greece desired to be seen as one nation with the glories of antiquity, the Byzantine period and the subjugation by the Turks all part of its history rather than ancient Greece and modern Greece being two separate entities

[226] Ioannis 2008.
[227] Voutsaki 2003, 250.
[228] Christodoulou 2010, 454.
[229] Herzfeld 1981, 44.

that were related.

4.3 Greek 19th-century Olympic Revivals

The revival of the Olympic Games in Greece was crucial in cementing the Greek continuity since the method of classicising Greece, especially Athens, felt like a relatively weak reply to Fallmerayer's claims without the restoration of ancient Greece's most famous institution. The Greeks repeatedly juxtaposed ancient and modern Greece as a method of bolstering Greece's reputation on the world stage and bringing back the Olympic Games allowed for an even more focused comparison. It may initially seem that constant comparison to a civilisation that was so highly revered would be unwise, since it could only have resulted in unfavourable views of the modern Greeks (as it often did). But this comparison also offered an opportunity for positive impact. Modern Greece, in comparison to ancient Greece, was incapable of surpassing the former due to level of idealisation the latter was subject to and the protection that antiquity's vagueness afforded it. Modern Greece was limited by the reality provided by its contemporaneity while ancient Greece was abstract and therefore boundless. However, the revival of the Olympic Games offered the nation an opportunity to show that it could at least potentially match its ancient ancestor in some regard, which had the potential to have an immensely positive effect on the West's image of Greece. This was a complex relationship though as Greece was attempting to integrate ancient glories into its history while simultaneously juxtaposing itself with these same glories.

In 1833, Greek novelist and poet Panagiotis Soutsos produced a patriotic poem

entitled *Dialogues of the Dead* in which the philosopher Plato looks up on contemporary Greece from the underworld and says:

> Recall the former splendour of your Greece.
>
> Tell me, where are your ancient aeons?
>
> Where are your Olympic Games?[230]

Plato's words reiterate the Greek belief that there was a continuity between modern and ancient Greece as denoted by the reference to Greece's 'former splendour'. At the same time, there is a suggestion that Greece in its then-current state was slightly inferior to that of antiquity. That Plato specifically mentions the Olympic Games, which were not then a feature of modern Greece also suggests that, to Soutsos, despite much of the neoclassicisation that had occurred, the restoration of this famous institution was required to completely return Greece to its former reputation. Thus, Soutsos, via Plato, brings ancient Hellas into direct comparison with the newly independent Greece and the thoughts expressed in *Dialogues of the Dead* represent the beginning of the Olympic revival on Greek soil.

Later in 1833, he published another poem entitled *The Ruins of Ancient Sparta*, which demonstrated the development of these musings. In this poem, the shade of Leonidas, Sparta's great warrior-king, addresses contemporary Greece thus:

> You have matched us ancients in terms of bravery in battle…

[230] Soutsos 1835, 151.

> From now on let your only competition be one for national glory…
> Let the only contests you have be those national games, the Olympics…
> What will you now achieve united, marching forward under one king, with wise steps, giant steps to your original glory?[231]

Soutsos had several aims here: first, he compares the glory of the victory over the Turks with that acquired by the ancients in battle so as to portray modern Greece as equal to ancient Greece in this respect. However, he acknowledges that the absence of the Olympic Games is still a differentiator–by equating the modern and ancient Greeks he draws from the glory of the latter and bestows it on the former. Second, he wished to internalise Greek energy by encouraging the cessation of war with foreign nations and the focusing of the nation's efforts on contests that promoted intranational competition and patriotism. Finally, his reference to the 'original glory' of Greece and the fact that his poems feature prominent ancient Hellenes directly communicating with their modern ancestors were clear retorts to Fallmerayer's assertions.

Soutsos went further than simply producing poetry and much like the Philhellenes of western Europe he too took practical action. In 1835 he reached out to the Greek government in an article in his newspaper *Helios*, proposing that Greece celebrate its independence from the Ottoman Empire on 25th March–the traditional start date of the Greek revolution–and revive the Olympic Games as part of this celebration in order to invoke antiquity and incite nationalist sentiments

[231] Ibid. 166-167.

concurrently.[232] To Soutsos, the Olympic Games were quintessentially Greek and their successful restoration would be an important step in consolidating the modern-ancient continuity. It would also help refute Fallmerayer's assertions that the modern Greeks were too culturally dissimilar to the Hellenes of antiquity to possibly be related.[233] Soutsos' proposal for the date of Greek Independence Day was accepted but the restoration of the Games did not immediately come to fruition. Three years later the inhabitants of Letrini, a town near Olympia, inspired by Soutsos' earlier actions, proposed to revive the Olympic Games as the 'Letrinian Games'–also on 25th March–but there are no historical records of this revival so it is unlikely that it ever took place.[234] Nonetheless, the general idea of the importance of the Games' revival to the unification of the nation's identity had begun to spread. Soutsos, fuelled by patriotism, was undeterred and refused to let the idea slip.[235]

It was in 1859 that he was eventually able to witness an Olympic revival on Greek soil thanks to Evangelis Zappas who sponsored the production of the Zappian Games (referred to as simply *Olympia* at the time).[236] Soutsos believed that the reestablishment of the Olympic Games was a symbolic stamp of authority stating that this was not a new nation but an enduring one that was reviving its traditions of old; without their restoration modern Greece would always be inferior in comparison to its ancient ancestor. Thankfully for him, Zappas' similar level of

[232] Young 1996, 4.
[233] This argument is far from convincing on Fallmerayer's part since race does not dictate culture and cultural shifts occur over time in every known civilisation.
[234] Young 1991, 102.
[235] In 1842 he composed another poem and in the dedication to King Otto that preceded it he again suggested the resurrection of the Olympic Games (Young 1996, 7). In 1845 he delivered a speech in Athens calling for the revival in front of 15,000 people (Matthews 2005, 45). In 1851 in the prologue to *Ta Hapanta* he stated that 'if Greece would re-establish the Olympic Games on every 25 March… then the peoples of the world would respect Greece' (Young 1996, 7).
[236] Young 1996, 13.

persistence and his willingness to fund whatever was required facilitated the return of the Games on Greek soil as well as the renovation of the Panathenaic stadium. Soutsos and Zappas, who died in 1868 and 1865 respectively, were unable to witness any of the further three instalments of the Zappian Games held in 1870, 1875 and 1889. The latter, however, left a vast fortune in his will exclusively for the continuation of the Olympic Games every four years such was his belief in its importance to Greece's future.[237] These occurred with varying success but a year after the final instalment a royal decree was signed by both Crown Prince Constantine and foreign minister Stephanos Dragoumis to announce that the Olympic Games would be held in Greece at four year intervals starting from 1892, restarting the ancient tradition. These games did not take place because of a lack of funding available to the Greek government but the desire to keep the Olympic spirit alive was there and de Coubertin's proposal for the inaugural IOC Olympic Games to be held in Athens 1896 provided the perfect opportunity to fulfil Soutsos' wish and showcase to the world that Greece in its modern form was a worthy ancestor to the ancient Hellenes.

Vikelas accepted the role of host country at the Sorbonne Congress on Greece's behalf seeing the potential to enhance Greece's reputation. The Greek government were not as fond of the idea due to Greece's floundering economic state and the movement lacked support from the Prime Minister Charilaos Trikoupis. His opponent Theodoros Deligiannes was in favour of the idea and eventually came to power in January 1895.[238] There was a growing thought that Greece had to restore the Olympics despite their lack of financial restores in order

[237] Young 1996, 42.
[238] Guttmann 2002, 15.

to prove to the world that they were a sophisticated nation and that they were capable of living up to their ancient heritage. The Greek goal aligned perfectly with de Coubertin's plans; he wanted to implement his new world philosophy and embedding it into Greek's antiquity provided the perfect tool for its conveyance. Again, Greek antiquity was used as a vehicle for other agendas, as effective for Dover or Brookes as it was for de Coubertin or the nation of Greece.

In his book *The Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Revival* (1996), David Young explores whether de Coubertin and King George of Greece had some form of prior agreement to the Sorbonne Conference that Athens be the first host of the Games concluding that it is likely despite a lack of concrete evidence.[239] It is clear that the Greek royals were supporters of an Olympic revival, that Crown Prince Constantine had proposed the Athens Olympiad for 1892 and became president of the HOC for the IOC's 1896 Games proves this.[240] Hosting an international sporting event gave Greece the opportunity to not only keep the Olympic spirit alive in Greece after the decline of the Zappian Games but also allowed the nation to display on the international stage that it was capable of hosting a major event just like in ancient times. The 1896 Games could be used in the way that Soutsos had originally envisaged–to bring modern Greece level with ancient Hellas–but they were also now international.

4.4 The 1896 Athens Olympics

[239] Young 1996, 102-105.
[240] Matthews 2005, 72.

As part of the plan to use the 1896 Olympic Games as a confirmation of Greece's continuity, the nation presented Athens to the world with a heavy emphasis on both nationalism and antiquity. An article written in the new year before the Athens Games by Greek journalist Demetrios Kalopathakes for the American newspaper *The Nation* summarised this method neatly. Kalopathakes wrote of a 'special satisfaction' afforded to the Greek people to be competing 'on the noble field of athletics, which their ancestors made immortal', doing his patriotic duty in reinforcing the link between modern and ancient Greece.[241] He also described the plans for an 'artistic illumination of the great monuments of antiquity by night, a grand historical torchlight procession, representing memorable scenes from Greek history, ancient and modern' that would visually demonstrate this connection–the official Olympic report confirms that these events did indeed take place.[242] Thus, the motif of continuity was promoted explicitly even before the outset of the Games; Coubertin himself reveals that 'the two letters "O.A.", the Greek initials of the Olympic Games, and the two dates 776 BC, 1896 AD, indicating their ancient past and present renascence, could be seen everywhere'.[243] These dates were also posted on the title page of the Olympic Report, connected by a hyphen, therefore presenting the Games in a way that overlooks the fact there was a hiatus of over 1500 years.

The nationalistic aspect of the Games was emphasised by the decision to have two opening ceromonies. One on the 24th March (5th April), which was Easter Sunday, to commemorate George Averoff for his act of immense patriotism, the donation

[241] Kalopathakes 1895, 237.
[242] Ibid. Lambros and Politis 1896, 16.
[243] De Coubertin 2000, 353.

920,000 drachmas to fund the renovation of the Panathenaic stadium.[244] The other, the official opening ceremony, was held on the following day, Greek Independence Day.[245] Christina Koulouri notes that there was a triple allusion to revival as a result of the selection of these dates since the feast of Easter celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Greek Independence Day celebrated the revival of the Greek nation and the opening ceremony celebrated the restoration of the ancient Olympic Games.[246] This combined the themes of nationalism, continuity from ancient times and Christianity in one action. The juxtaposition of Christianity and the revival of an ancient pagan festival also reinforced Paparrigopoulos and Zambelios' nationalistic scholarship on Greek continuity through the Byzantine period. The success of the Olympics rapidly became a national priority and the responsibility of every Greek not just the athletes and the members of the HOC, with the people and Greek government all playing their part where possible.

Although the government could not afford to contribute financially to the production of the cultural spectacles listed by Kalopathekes, they did commission the production of various celebratory stamps–the proceeds of which went directly to the overall funding of the Games.[247] These stamps were emblazoned with classicising imagery, again combining patriotism with the invocation of antiquity. They included images of naked athletes wrestling, four-horse chariot racing, an image depicting Myron's *Discobolus*, a vase depicting the goddess Athena, an

[244] Young 1996, 128.
[245] According to the Julian calendar that was still in use in Greece at the time this was 25th March, this corresponds to 6th April on the Gregorian calendar.
[246] Koulouri 2006, 74.
[247] Lambros and Politis 1896, 16. Yalouris, Andronikos and Szymiczek 1976, 296: The stamps raised 400,000 gold drachmas.

image of Praxiteles' statue of the god Hermes, an image of Paionius' sculpture of the goddess Nike and one displaying the Parthenon atop the Acropolis (figure 4.1).[248] There was also one final stamp epicting the newly renovated Stadium in front of the Acropolis, which epitomised the way in which Greece combined antiquity and modernity to highlight the continuity.

Figure 4.1 1896 Athens Olympics Stamps

An unnamed special correspondent for the 1896 Games from *The Times* described the newly renovated Stadium as 'an object of interest that is at the same time new and old', which was exactly how the Greeks wished for the Games and Greece to be seen.[249] The Greeks left no medium untouched when it came to classicising features and the motif of revival permeated the entire Games, best epitomised by

[248] Philatelic Database 2019.
[249] The Times 1896, 6. The correspondent is not named.

the engraving of the participation medals of the Games (figure 4.2).[250] Etched on the obverse was an image of the goddess Nike holding a laurel wreath whilst seated on a phoenix emerging from flames; the Acropolis was situated in the background.[251] The reverse had a Greek legend surrounded by an olive wreath. Phoenixes were mythological birds said to combust at the end of their life before being reborn from their own ashes and so provided the perfect metaphor for what the IOC and the Greeks wished to portray in regards to the Olympic Games and their ancestry respectively: the modern Olympics and modern Greek people were the same as their ancient counterparts, only reinvigorated versions.

Figure 4.2 1896 Athens Olympics Participation Medals

Even parts of the athletic programme appeared to have ancient roots; wrestling and the discus throw were both part of the ancient pentathlon. Most significant, though, was the marathon that was invented specifically for the 1896 Games. It was given its name by Michel Bréal in his letter to de Coubertin in September

[250] Wagner 2019. These medals were given to all athletes, officials and participants and were completely separate to those awarded to winners.
[251] Compare how Nike appeared on certain medals awarded at the Much Wenlock Olympian Games prior to this.

1892. Bréal suggested that a race from Marathon to the Pnyx should be introduced as an event because of its 'ancient character'.[252] Though there was no equivalent athletic event in antiquity, Bréal was most likely referring to the events detailed in Robert Browning's 1879 poem *Pheidippides*, which represents an amalgamation of several stories from ancient sources surrounding the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. *Pheidippides* tells the tale of a messenger who completed an immensely long run that can be split into three sections: the first step of the journey was a run from Athens to Sparta to ask the Spartans for reinforcements in the battle against the Persians; following this, Pheidippides is said to have ran from Sparta to the battlefield at Marathon before finally returning to Athens to announce the Greek victory where he died due to severe exhaustion shortly after this proclamation.[253]

The tale is often wrongly ascribed to Herodotus since his *Histories* contains the earliest mention of the Pheidippides, whom he reported running from Athens to Sparta in a day.[254] However, there is no mention of a runner travelling from Marathon until Plutarch's *Moralia* in the 1st century AD, where he supplies the names Thersippus of Eroeadae and Eucles for messengers who travelled from the battle of Marathon to Athens to announce victory before perishing.[255] It is only in Lucian's *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting* that we see Pheidippides' name (in the form of Philippides) associated with a journey from Marathon followed by his immediate death.[256] The fact that these sources are far from consistent and neither

[252] Lennartz 1998, 9.
[253] It is approximately 135 miles from Athens to Sparta, Sparta to Marathon is approximately 150 miles and Marathon to Athens is around 20 miles.
[254] Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 106.
[255] Plutarch *Moralia* 347c. According to the same source it was Heracleides Ponticus who believed that this messenger was named Thersippus but Plutarch swiftly discredits him.
[256] Lucian, *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting* 3. It is thought that Pheidippides and Philippides were the same person.

Pausanias in *Description of Greece* nor Thucydides in *History of The Peloponnesian War* make any reference to these events suggests that the story is closer to myth than history, as it was presented.[257] Bréal's claims show how as a result of the distortion of ancient historiography at some point, modern historiography has also been affected. Jaakko Suolahti sums the issue up thus: 'Lucian's story of the first Marathon runner, who never existed, is a good example of how a completely fictitious event, if it is effective enough, becomes common knowledge in favourable circumstances, through its appeal to people's feelings and their idea of the time concerned. Once it has found its way on the page of history, it is as effective as if it had actually taken place'.[258] The version of ancient Greece that Bréal understood was at the mercy of human transmission and the changes that occur with each individual reception to the point where he probably genuinely believed the marathon race did have 'ancient character'. De Coubertin, in typical style, was not overly concerned about historical accuracy when there was an apt opportunity for Hellenic appropriation and accepted Bréal's recommendation because 'history imposed it', knowing how powerful a perceived continuation from antiquity could be and the way that this event would be received by the Greek people.[259]

The marathon race had a special significance to the Greeks and they claimed it as their event because of the 'history' behind it.[260] Furthermore, by the time the event

[257] International Olympic Committee n.d., *Athens 1896*: 'Due to its historical significance, the Greek hosts wanted to win the marathon above all else'. There was no confirmed historical significance however.
[258] Suolahti 1967, 133.
[259] De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 574.
[260] Lambros and Politis 1896, 82. See page 84: 'the Marathon Race occupied the foremost place in the minds of every true Hellene' and page 100: 'the mere name of Marathon and whatever was attached to it, excited the interest of the public'.

came about, other Greek-inspired event, the discus throw, had already been won by the American Robert Garnett and Greek winners had been sparser than the home nation had anticipated. The race presented the Greeks with a rare opportunity to burst out of the shadow of their ancient ancestors by successfully completing a distance that led to Pheidippides' death. In reality, the race was only 24.8 miles long so the distance has nothing to do with Pheidippides' supposed feat but nevertheless, when Spyridon Louis, a Greek water-carrier and shepherd, placed first to the jubilation of the 70,000-strong crowd and Greek nation he was instantly declared a national hero.[261] This was a huge victory for modern Greece and he was showered with gifts that ranged from free shaves for life at an Athenian barber shop to an open invitation from the King of Greece to ask for anything his heart desired–a style of rewarding that is reminiscent of ancient times.[262]

Louis' success epitomised the overall success that the Olympic Games had been for Greece and it is more than fitting that he won the 'ancient Greek' event in front of such a large crowd, as ultimately the success of the Games was not a result of the quality of the organisation or the performances of the athletes but rather because of the ardour of the Greek nation. Not only had the Greek hero Louis defeated contemporary athletes from around the world but he had bested the specialist ancient runner Pheidippides, reflecting how the Greeks had surpassed their ancient ancestors in their hosting of the Games.[263] King George's statement at a closing dinner with the competitors, organisers and foreign delegates

[261] This has since been fixed at 26.22 miles by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) in 1921 based on the length ran at the 1908 Olympics held in London. De Coubertin and Müller 2000, 574.
[262] International Olympic Committee n.d., *Local Hero Spiridon Louis Earns Cult Status in Marathon*.
[263] Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 105: Herodotus labels him a *hemerodromes*, which literally translates to 'a person that runs for a day'.

summarises the Greek effort: ‘Greece, the mother and rearer of gymnastic competitions in antiquity, has courageously undertaken the task of holding them again today, under the gaze of Europe and the New World, and now that their success is generally acknowledged, she can hope that the foreigners have honoured her will proclaim our country a peaceful meeting place of nations, and the permanent home of the Olympic Games.’[264] While de Coubertin ensured that the latter did not happen Greece had successfully proved to the world not only that the modern Olympics could be an ongoing success but that the nation was indeed competent, capable of delivering the Olympic Games in a way that was worthy of their ancestors and arguably even surpassed them by bringing together nations from across the world.

[264] Yalouris, Andronikos and Szymiczek 1976, 308.

Conclusion

This research project has aimed to assess the appropriation of ancient Greece in the West between the late sixteenth and the late nineteenth centuries by cross-referencing various modern scholarship with ancient sources to ascertain how ancient Greece has been constructed. What it has found is that because of the human fondness for tradition and need for validation–something that stems back all the way to Greek antiquity if not before–combined with a growing idealisation, the legitimising capabilities that ancient Greece developed during this time were so great that many of the details depicted in the ancient sources became redundant. This study has highlighted the importance of critically reviewing scholarship on ancient Greece since even many of the leading figures in certain fields display a distinct lack of commitment to accuracy.

Classical scholars and revivalists alike have consistently moulded Greek antiquity to their will, free from an authority to police their proposals and prevent ancient Greece's reality slipping away. A pertinent example is the myth of ancient amateurism, which was not significantly challenged until David Young's 1984 publication *The Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics*, by which point Mahaffy's initial fabrication had been read and regurgitated for over a hundred years, most crucially by influential IOC members like de Coubertin and Brundage who championed it internationally. Gaining popularity is as successful at providing longevity to scholarship as quality study and this study has shown how freely mistruths are spread from positions of authority simply for the promotion of personal agendas.

These works are then regurgitated and unfortunately this leads to an increase in the vagueness of antiquity as the boundary between myth and fact becomes increasingly blurred, in turn making the appropriation of ancient Greece an even more attractive option to provide legitimation.

As the idealisation of Greek antiquity grew, from ancient Greece being shorthand for honour and morality all the way through to fanatical Philhellenism and modern Greek nationalism, the range of functions that ancient Greece could serve increased exponentially. At its idealised peak, it had the capability to justify even massacres and men travelling across Europe to fight on behalf of the ancestors of the revered ancient Hellenes. This study has proven Greek antiquity to be not just an extremely powerful legitimising tool but also a flexible one, having been called upon to endorse continuities, discredit religious beliefs, promote philosophies, consolidate national identities, and separate classes all with similar success. It adds to the research field by approaching the appropriation of ancient Greece from a new angle. By exploring interpretations of Greek antiquity by different nations at different points in time through the medium of Olympic revivals, it has contributed new knowledge not only to the field of Olympic history but also to classical reception studies. It has been unique in its treatment of the Cotswold Olimpick Games and the Much Wenlock Olympian Games, which have previously been discussed from a historical perspective but have not before been analysed in terms of the way their hosts used ancient Greece to support their ideals and used sporting events to convey them. This method in its novelty has presented several recommendations for further study. This project has focused on receptions in western European countries, namely England and France in addition to Greece,

which inherited its initial views on Greek antiquity from these countries in any case. All of these nations idealised ancient Greece to a relatively similar degree, a study of other pre-1896 revivals such as those held in Poland or Sweden may reveal different degrees of ancient Greece's legitimising success.[265] Olympic revivals are microcosms of nations and as the IOC's modern Olympics change host every four years, this method of analysis could also be used with any of these instalments to gauge changes in the relevance and sway of Greek antiquity in different countries at different points in history. However, as was the case at times with this project, to truly understand a revival one requires access to local scholarship, which is not always possible given how remote some of these locations are. With the Games soon relocating to Japan, it will be interesting to see what legitimising role Greek antiquity will play, if any, given that Japan has its own classical tradition and is far removed from the western culture that created such a powerful tool.

[265] Toohey and Veal 2000, 37: Revivals held at Poznan and Ramlösa.

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